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New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 9 and 122 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/62/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, Mr. President, I thank you for convening this meeting to consider the report of the Security Council (A/62/2). I am grateful to the President of the Council for presenting it. I also thank the Secretary-General for his notification pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 12 of the Charter (A/62/300). My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Angola on behalf of the Group of African States.

Reading the report makes us aware of the many challenges that the Council faced during the period under review. Outstanding progress has been made in managing such issues, thanks to the Council's commitment and firmness. Nevertheless, a great deal remains to be done in order to restrain the serious threats to international peace and security.

In the area of peacekeeping, Africa continues to take up a considerable proportion of the Council's agenda. We welcome the synergy that has been established between the Security Council and the African Union, which has enabled the two bodies to cooperate and gradually integrate the peace and security architecture of the African Union into the system of collective security established by the Charter.

Implementation of the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme to strengthen the capacities of the African Union will help the efforts to bring long-term stability to the continent. We urge the Security Council to continue to promote the Programme and to improve coordination of its activities in Africa with the African Union Peace and Security Council. We hope that the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on relations between the United Nations and the African Union will contain concrete recommendations on improving the structure of cooperation.

We welcome the Security Council's efforts to strengthen its actions to prevent the outbreak of new crises threatening international peace and security. The Council should establish an institutional framework to make its efforts more systematic and effective, as is currently the case with regard to preventing the resurgence of conflict by promoting peacebuilding in the framework of the Peacebuilding Commission established in December 2005.

We welcome the practice of Security Council visits to the countries on its agenda, in particular to African countries as well as to the headquarters of the African Union. This makes it possible to intensify consultations with the parties involved, particularly with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, as well as to harmonize options and approaches to joint solutions in order to overcome the problems identified.

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In this connection, the decision to deploy a hybrid mission to Darfur marks a significant evolution in cooperation and a better division of labour. We also welcome the efforts to improve the prospects of a lasting peace in West Africa. The Council's report emphasizes that, in spite of the grave concerns caused by the proliferation of light weapons, the situation appears more promising than it has been for some years.

The considerable efforts to promote international justice and combat impunity for crimes connected with massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law must be continued. The Council should consolidate the achievements made in this regard, so that the implementation of completion strategies does not call into question the possibility of prosecuting fugitives, which is essential to the preservation of peace in the countries concerned.

The Council should also ensure that the jurisprudence of the international criminal tribunals is accessible to those countries at all times. The African Union must also be considered as a possible destination for the records of the proceedings of the tribunals operating in Africa. In this respect, there should be cooperation with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

It is noteworthy that the Security Council has conducted a fruitful dialogue with Member States on general issues pertaining to international peace and security, especially through public and thematic debates. The views expressed by States in that dialogue should be taken into account so that this extremely valuable exercise of thematic debates may give rise to a constant momentum, strengthening the effectiveness of the Council's action.

The fact remains that the Security Council in its current configuration has inconsistencies that affect its capacity for action. We hope that steps will be taken during the current session to carry out the long awaited reform of the Council. My delegation looks forward to this reform, which should affect the two categories of seats on the Council and its working methods. Our views are well known on the bold steps needed to enhance the Council's representativity, and thus its legitimacy and authority.

In general, we should take advantage of the significant progress achieved during the course of the sixty-first session, which should serve as the basis for determining the parameters of the Council's new configuration so that it can respond to the new geopolitical realities of the 21st century. This new configuration should take into consideration the need to correct the historic injustice done to Africa by its exclusion from the permanent seats on the Security Council. We repeat the legitimate claim of the African continent to two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats to provide equitable representation of all of its subregions, in accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus and the 2005 Syrte Declaration. Reform must ensure an equitable representation of developing countries, as well as a geographical distribution of seats, taking into account the numeric weight of each region within the Organization.

In the same vein, we should firmly commit to reform of the Council's working methods to clearly take into account and express the sovereign equality of Member States and other cardinal principles of the Charter. The consideration that the Council has begun on this matter deserves to be pursued, taking into account Member States' specific proposals, and in particular those of the "S-5" group, which my delegation supports.

At the end of the sixty-first session, Mr. President, under the visionary leadership of your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa — to whom I pay tribute — the General Assembly gave a clear mandate on the next stage of Security Council reform. As you so well emphasized in your statement at the beginning of the current session, we must have the courage to begin the next phase, which should lead to concrete results. The next phase of which you spoke is intergovernmental negotiations to provide the United Nations and the international community with a Security Council that is more representative in its composition, more transparent, more inclusive in its working methods, and thus more effective in dealing with threats to international peace and security.

We count on you, Mr. President, to conduct the negotiations, and encourage you to appoint one or two coordinators to help you in that very delicate exercise. Before the end of this session we should — working modestly, calmly and with determination — reach agreement on the substance of a bold reform meeting the expectations of the international community and the peoples of the United Nations, especially in the twenty-first century.

Mr. De Palacio España (Spain): The Spanish delegation appreciates the opportunity of this joint debate to express its views about Security Council reform in all its aspects.

The last session of the General Assembly witnessed unusual and particularly fruitful activity concerning consideration of equitable representation on the Security Council, increase in its membership and other issues relating to the Security Council.

To a large extent, that activity was due to the leadership of the former President of the General Assembly and, through her mandate, to the work done by the group of five facilitators — the Permanent Representatives of Cyprus, Croatia, Chile, the Netherlands and Tunisia — as well as the work done later, under a new presidential mandate, by the Permanent Representatives of Chile and Liechtenstein, building on the work of the former group.

If one had to single out one proposal that embodied the spirit of the conclusions reached in those reports, the most significant would undoubtedly be the proposal that the General Assembly should choose a formula for Security Council reform that could win the greatest possible political acceptance among Members, and in any case a level well above the majority stipulated by the Charter.

As a result of our work at the end of the previous session, the Assembly decided to continue, at the current session, to examine the question now before us, in order to achieve further concrete steps, including through intergovernmental negotiations, building on the progress made so far. In a striking step forward, it also urged the Open-ended Working Group to exert efforts to achieve general agreement among Member States in the consideration of all topics related to this question. This decision was ratified by the General Assembly in plenary session.

My delegation, together with the other delegations that form the Uniting for Consensus group, considers that the new phase of negotiation to be started under your leadership, Mr. President, should use the framework provided by the Open-ended Working Group. We can all be represented there and make known our positions in a fair and open fashion, building on the results achieved so far, particularly in the previous session. We can do so with a view to reaching general agreement, ruling out alternatives that would promote voting on exclusive and partisan positions reflective of interests that we believe are not the general interests of the Assembly.

The dialogue begun in recent months, resulting in the recommendation of the Working Group and the Assembly decision that I referred to previously, is the only way in which to resolve the question of Security Council reform in a manner that can pave the way for genuine negotiations, with an in-depth exploration of formulas that will make it possible to reach general agreement, as regards both the composition of the Security Council and the reform of its working methods. We believe that the two aspects should be considered jointly, with a view to finding a solution.

My delegation believes that the two reports resulting from the work at the last session should be considered together as a useful tool in order to begin a negotiating process, as noted in the letter of the former President of the General Assembly of 26 June. Together with a significant number of other delegations, we have been supporting the proposed approach that we should first seek a provisional agreement, subject to revision, known as the "intermediary approach", in order to secure the broadest possible support for reform and thus increase the probability of being implemented and being effective.

At the current session, the Open-ended Working Group should undertake consultations for the necessary drawing up of the framework, format and modalities of negotiations, in order to better prepare for a proper negotiating phase. Without wishing to set artificial and unrealistic deadlines, we hope that that phase will begin soon.

Mr. President, my delegation has complete confidence in your capacity and determination to push forward the work of preparing this negotiating ground. The preparation should be carried out in transparent and open consultations with the relevant groups, already known, without intermediaries, since the task of defining the alternatives and proposals has already been done and is well known.

We believe that this is not the moment to present unilateral initiatives. Instead, we should work together under the same leadership, without prejudice to our respective positions, with the shared objective of achieving viable reform. We therefore consider that it is not appropriate for us to give you a new mandate, beyond the one that you already have, Mr. President,

much less fix terms of reference, however general, in order to begin the work that we must now all undertake, since that would be neither necessary nor desirable.

Mr. President, you may rely on the support of my delegation in initiating the measures you consider necessary within the framework that we have indicated. My delegation — together with, I am sure, all the delegations working together for consensus — is fully committed to the ultimate goal of continuing to work honestly and seriously, with an open mind, for a negotiated proposal that will lead to general agreement on Security Council reform.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): At the outset, we thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia for introducing the report on the activities of the Security Council for the period 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007 (A/62/2).

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1) reflected, amongst many other important issues, the resolve of world leaders to support the reform of the Security Council. That reform is considered an essential element of the overall reform efforts of the United Nations. Additionally, and indeed critically, the reform of the Security Council would make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent, and would further enhance its effectiveness and legitimacy in the implementation of its decisions globally.

We commend you, Mr. President, for your strong leadership in translating the resolve of world leaders in your five stated priorities of climate change, financing for development, the Millennium Development Goals, countering terrorism, and, lastly and importantly, renewing the management, effectiveness and coherence of this Organization, which includes Security Council reform.

In order to facilitate a fair, effective and transparent process, an intergovernmental negotiating process must be initiated immediately. Such a process could be determined through an objective and transparent method, such as a questionnaire or straw poll, to arrive at a set of elements that could command the widest support, so that they can serve as the basis for such intergovernmental negotiations.

In this regard, we propose that the following elements be included: first, expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories; secondly, greater representation for the developing countries, including better access for island and small States; thirdly, representation for the developed countries and those with transition economies, reflective of contemporary world realities; fourthly, comprehensive improvement in the Council's working methods — here we acknowledge the work of the S-5 group; fifthly, equitable geographical distribution; lastly, provision for review.

We also believe that there must be a review mechanism on a periodical basis so that you, Mr. President, and future Presidents of the Assembly can inform Member States of progress in achieving concrete results on the comprehensive reform of the Council.

Sixty years after the founding of the United Nations, the Security Council no longer reflects current political realities. Despite a nearly fourfold increase in the membership of the United Nations since the Organization was established, the size and composition of the Security Council, particularly its permanent membership, has remained intact.

Any reform process must advance the core interests of the vast majority of Member States. Any expansion of the Security Council needs to be in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, with representation given in both categories to developing countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

To conclude, the discussions on this issue have continued unabated for over a decade. Unless there is an intergovernmental process, the discussions will remain just that.

Mr. President, we support you, and we look forward to your strong leadership in this instance.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): Mr. President, I join colleagues in thanking you for convening this timely meeting on agenda item 9, report of the Security Council, and agenda item 122, question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I start by associating myself with the statement made by Mr. Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola, on behalf of the African Group. I also commend Mr. Marty Natalegawa, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for his very succinct and lucid presentation of the annual report of the Security Council.

With regard to the report, I shall limit myself to a few comments.

My delegation believes that by simply presenting its activities in chronological order the Council does not fully live up to its mandate. It would be more helpful if the following steps were taken.

The report could be more analytical, giving an assessment of the actions and decisions taken. The Council could hold an open session to discuss its report in depth, so as to enlighten Member States on its actions and its decision-making process, as most decisions are thrashed out and finalized in closed consultations. The Council could submit to the Assembly a quarterly or semi-annual report, or a special report, so that the Assembly could hold periodic meetings on the Council's activities during the course of the year. That would no doubt enhance the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of the Council.

There could also be periodic interaction and coordination between the Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, with a view to enhancing coherence and avoiding any encroachment on each other's mandates.

Notwithstanding the points I have just made, I commend the Council for its efforts in striving for peace and security, particularly in the countries in conflict situations in Africa.

I approach agenda item 122 from the following angles: the ongoing consultations in the Open-ended Working Group; the report of the President of the General Assembly at the sixty-first session; and the report of the facilitators.

The 15-year-old ongoing consultations on the reform of the Security Council, involving Member States at the level of Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and permanent representatives, among others, have generated many ideas and proposals, each as important as the others — so much so that we now find ourselves in the situation of having difficulty in choosing the best course of action.

However, on the basis of consultations held so far, my delegation is of the view that the optimum ground has been covered that could provide the necessary elements to start intergovernmental negotiations. Those elements may be summed up as follows: there can be no meaningful reform of the Council without an expansion of the membership in the category of both permanent and non-permanent members; greater representation of the developing countries, including small and island States; comprehensive improvement in the Council's working methods; and a review of the use of the veto.

The President of the Assembly at its sixty-first session issued a report (A/61/47) on the reform of the Security Council, including the reports of the facilitators. In her concluding remarks at the end of the sixty-first session, the President stated, inter alia, that she hoped Member States would "have the courage to begin discussions on meaningful intergovernmental negotiations" (*A/61/PV.109, p. 16*). Her report, read together with the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document on reform of the Security Council, underscores the following as points of prime importance: status quo no longer acceptable; support for early reform of the Security Council; start of meaningful intergovernmental negotiations; achievement of comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects; and a more representative, legitimate and effective Security Council.

Based on consultations that the facilitators held, particularly those about the status quo not being an option and the fact that flexibility is required to move the reform process ahead, they proposed what is described as an intermediary or transitional approach. However, the facilitators acknowledge that the parameters of the intermediary approach have yet to be defined appropriately and accurately.

The difficulty of a clear definition is mainly due to the complexity of the topic under consideration. That is also why the facilitators' reports contain all along such vague and inconclusive terms as "a large number of States", "a group of States", "overwhelming majority" and "a significant number" to describe certain proposals and positions. Obviously, these terms do not convey a clear picture of the accurate numbers involved. Transparency, objectivity and accountability of reporting on a subject of such great importance and magnitude are essential to enlist the confidence of Member States.

The intermediary approach, as proposed by the facilitators, is not very different from the transitional approach that has existed since 1965, when the Security Council was expanded by an additional five non-permanent seats. It is certainly not my delegation's

intention to repeat the same sort of exercise in the present changed geopolitical realities of the world.

Furthermore, the intermediary approach proposes a mandate review at a predetermined date to review and assess the inadequacy of this arrangement. As other speakers have pointed out, in the absence of a clear time frame and an accurately defined mandate, the mandate review itself may be doomed to failure, with the end result being that we may run the risk of postponing the comprehensive reform of the Security Council for decades.

The intermediary approach in its present form contains the seeds of further perpetuating the historic injustice done to Africa. It further eludes the legitimate aspirations of the Common African Position, which calls for at least two permanent seats as early as possible. Ambassador Wang Guangya, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China, was perfectly right when he said yesterday that

> "Any formula on Security Council reform that does not address the concerns of Africa can hardly win endorsement of the entire United Nations membership and will not have the backing of China". (*A/62/PV.48*)

We have observed in the past 10 years that the use of the veto in the Security Council has diminished significantly. For example, we have noted that the United States has used it 12 times, the Russian Federation twice and the People's Republic of China three times. The United Kingdom and France have not used it during that period. Indeed, the veto has become an anachronism in an era in which the Berlin wall fell down almost two decades ago, democracy is taking firm root almost everywhere in the world, from Africa to Asia, the Latin American and Caribbean region and Eastern Europe, and also at a time when we are witnessing wide-scale globalization.

Ambassador Mahiga, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, in his statement to the Working Group on 3 May as Chairman of the African Group for the month of May 2007, clearly described the African position on the veto:

> "Africa is opposed in principle to the veto but it is of the view that so long it exists, and as a matter of common justice, it should be made available to all permanent members of the Security Council. Alternatively, it should be addressed in a manner to make it progressively circumscribed, rendered irrelevant and thereafter removed altogether."

We salute the legitimate aspirations of those regional groups and individual Member States that have had the courage to rise to the challenge and say that they are ready to serve as permanent members should a chance be given to them to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and to serve humankind.

We are among those who believe that by making our neighbours and friends stronger we become stronger, too. That is why Mauritius remains committed to the Common African Position, which calls for two permanent seats, with all the privileges, and five non-permanent seats, as spelt out in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

We continue to support the idea of a Member State from Latin America and the Caribbean having a permanent seat on the Security Council. We also continue to say that a permanent seat for India is long overdue, not only because it is a time-tested democracy, the largest in the world, established just after the founding of the United Nations, but also because it has proved to the world that, despite being a multiracial and multicultural society, and a developing country, it can provide stability, peace and security to more than one seventh of the world's population without any assistance or intervention from the international community.

Mauritius was one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.69, along with India, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Benin, Burundi, Rwanda, Cape Verde, Jamaica, Barbados, Papa New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, to name but a few. Mauritius sponsored it in full awareness of its content and implications, and in conformity with the Common African Position.

As of now, when we refer to a permanent seat on the Security Council, we mean a permanent seat with all its privileges. Indeed, the draft resolution was successful in breaking the usual stalemate of the Open-ended Working Group by including the element of intergovernmental negotiations in the Group's report to the Assembly at its sixty-first session. As a matter of fact, it was a wake-up call with regard to adherence to the lowest common denominator with regard to comprehensive reform of the Security Council. It

demonstrated that it was not a matter of business as usual.

I conclude on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters with a view that is in keeping with the recommendations of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, with paragraph 26 of the second facilitators' report (A/61/47) and with the resolve of the Millennium Declaration and the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit of Heads of State and Government. My delegation believes that it is high time we initiated intergovernmental negotiations, without any further delay. In this respect, my delegation proposes that we adopt an objective and transparent mechanism that could determine the elements that enjoy the widest possible support in order to start intergovernmental negotiations.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I assure you of my delegation's total support for an equitable, meaningful, comprehensive, transparent, legitimate and effective Security Council.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. My delegation is among those that believe that it should — and, indeed, will — be the last of this general nature. The feeling of déjà vu is already too strong. The only assured plus of repeating this debate over and over is that it may leave us with the illusion of staying young.

It is decades since the last enlargement of the Security Council. Soon it will be decades since we started open-ended discussions on how we can set about the next. Let us agree that politically it is not healthy to have a subject matter open indefinitely for revision and reform.

I refrain from saying "It is now or never", although the tune plays in many minds each time we touch this topic. It is, nevertheless, clear that either we start serious enlargement negotiations now or it would be better to call it quits, live with the Council as it is and go about our business.

If we decide to go for it, we shall find that plenty of substantive preparatory work has already been done. We are overwhelmingly of the view that we need an enlarged Council so that it is more representative and more reflective of today's political realities.

We have a framework for an intermediary enlargement that commands broad support, for under the present circumstances it is logical to expand the Council in both categories of membership. There are several draft resolutions on the topic. We also have a fresh resolution from last September warranting negotiations on the Council's reform during this session.

My take from all this is that now you, Mr. President, have a historic opportunity to set the negotiating process in motion and see to it that it delivers the enlargement of the Security Council. You know that on this goal you can count on several times more friends among the delegations than on any other conceivable issue. Please register the unconditional readiness of my delegation in that regard.

A sufficiently representative enlargement might significantly increase ownership of the United Nations for countries and nations around the world. Conversely, lack of reform here would badly hurt the Organization, for it would have stayed the same for 40 years, as if there had been no such things as the end of the cold war or the dawning of the globalization era. At a time when even the climate seems to be changing, one could choose to view that as remarkable institutional stability, yet most would see it as, rather, a recipe for assured institutional diminution.

Failure to reform the Council would also mean that we had not been able to get our act together and do our job here in New York. Granted, decision-making on such a delicate political question cannot be confined to New York. Our job here, however, is to provide our leaders with proposals that can inform their policy- and decision-making. They actually formally asked us to do precisely that back in 2005.

Let me now sketch briefly the parameters around which the Romanian delegation would develop its position for the start of intergovernmental negotiations.

To be qualitatively meaningful and politically sustainable, enlargement should encompass both permanent and non-permanent membership categories. If the intermediary formula is pursued to achieve such comprehensive enlargement, access to mandates other than those currently featuring in the Charter should be granted on democratic electoral requirements. While it might not be possible to foretell the precise outcome of the intermediary process, the process should be subject to clear review provisions, so that nations can ensure through the democratic means already available in

national settings that only those qualified take up special obligations in the future enlarged Council.

The enlargement should consolidate the confidence of all Member States that they receive fair treatment from the Organization. Equitable geographical consideration is a primary requirement in that regard. Each Member State would have to see its chances of serving on the enlarged Council increased. When embarking on the enlargement, however, we should remain realistic, and in particular accept that no formula, no matter how elaborate, no matter how sophisticated, will achieve the absolute redress of inherited imbalances.

The delegation of Romania believes that the present Security Council carries out its responsibilities under the Charter in an effective, decisive and at the same time, depending on the circumstances, self-restrained manner. Its enlargement should therefore preserve those distinctive features. Size-wise, it should be possible to achieve that aim by extrapolating the magnitude of the previous enlargement to present-day expectations.

For the next enlargement to fly, it is of paramount importance that no one should be excluded, and that no arrangements should be construed by some at the expense of others. We have already wasted precious time by overlooking the resilient nature of the present regional configuration of the United Nations.

As we will, hopefully, start working on effecting a twenty-first century enlargement of the Security Council, let us forget that it is possible to treat the Eastern Europeans like the Cinderella of the United Nations — although that should probably be a reason for optimism, in fact, since in the fairy tale Cinderella eventually had her day under the moon. What the Eastern European Group wants is to emerge from enlargement with at least one additional elected mandate.

As my delegation sees it, while, with a remarkable display of modesty, no Eastern European State has so far claimed new permanent status, the aforementioned position means that all options, starting from one additional elected seat, are open.

Let us hope that we will be able to recall this day as the day when we decisively relaunched the Security Council enlargement process.

Mr. Sen (India): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this joint debate on agenda item 9, report of the Security Council, and agenda item 122, question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I begin where the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement ended, by congratulating Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Viet Nam on being elected non-permanent members of the Security Council. I also express our appreciation for the introduction of the Council's report by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia.

Before I come to the report itself, let me say that we have just heard about a fairy tale and Cinderella. There are some fairy tales that do not have any end, and this is one of them. Yesterday, I think, I was told by someone that it was Veterans Day. If it was, then indeed it was an auspicious occasion to begin this debate, because we have so many veterans of these debates, and we will continue to have many veterans in the years to come if we go on in the present manner. Ultimately, words buffalo past us.

A very interesting book has just been published by one of our former colleagues, John Bolton of the United States, called *Surrender Is Not an Option*. In it he writes that if he had been paid by the hour, as a lawyer in one of the United States legal firms is, he would have left the United Nations a very rich man. His bête noire, the man he really disliked, Lord Malloch-Brown, said in his Holmes Memorial Lecture on 7 June that there is one organization where one subject is discussed more often than sex — and that subject is Security Council reform. If Mr. Bolton and Lord Malloch-Brown agree, then quite clearly all this torrent of words has not got us very far. We have reached a point where we are no nearer to Security Council reform. Indeed, unless we move from words to action, this is likely to remain the case.

I return to the report. When it was being introduced, several issues were mentioned. I refer to one of them, not with any kind of pejorative purpose or to refer to any individual Member State, but simply to raise some of the structural problems that the Security Council faces today. I am speaking of the setting up of special tribunals.

We all know that, while the Security Council can set up subsidiary bodies, it cannot really give them legal powers. The reason is very simple and clear; it is

to be found in the old Roman principle of *nemo Jat qui non habet*, which means that one cannot give what one does not have. So certain legal infirmities have crept in.

This becomes even simpler and clearer when we come to another issue that was mentioned: thematic debates, such as those on natural resources and conflict. As we know, the subject of natural resources is one that the General Assembly really ought to deal with. This is the old principle of encroachment. In other words, in spite of the balance in the Charter, there is an encroachment that non-permanent members have not been able to prevent.

Across the board, both those who support the G-4 and those who support Uniting for Consensus have criticized several other aspects of the Security Council's functioning. One example is that the reports are not analytical. I think that one of the members of Uniting for Consensus said yesterday that the reports lack any substantial detail or information, and that, in fact, they have the same deficiencies year after year. Indeed, this is true.

Since the non-permanent members have not been able to set that right, it was a little illogical then to say that the Security Council should be expanded only in the non-permanent category. Here I must say that we are very appreciative of the good work done by Singapore, which went beyond the field of possibilities in 2002 and put a lot of analytical content into the reports. But it proved to be an Indian summer, a flash in the pan. Soon the report went back to the good old days — or the bad old days. Therefore, it was a very short-lived achievement.

Similarly, we appreciate the work that was done quite a few years ago by, for instance, Argentina and New Zealand, on involving the troop-contributing countries, but that again proved to be equally short-lived. We have resolution 1353 (2001), but even this has been rarely observed — and then only in the breach. That is because when the troop-contributing countries actually get together with the Security Council, the basic draft resolution is already set, the issues are already resolved — or at least decided upon, because they are not really resolved. Therefore, there is very little that the troop-contributing countries can contribute.

And why go to that resolution? It was not even a partial implementation — and even that was a failure — of Article 44 of the Charter, which is very clear. It states that those that put their troops at the disposal of the Security Council have to take part in the decision-making: mind you, not discussions, not debates, but decisions, which even would imply the right to vote. But this has not happened. Therefore, the Charter is unable to, in any manner, decide the working methods or what the Security Council does. The Charter, the supreme constitution of this body, cannot be any kind of check on the Security Council, any more than the General Assembly can.

Therefore, we have a situation in which the Security Council demands obedience, under Article 25, and levies troops, which are contributed by troop-contributing countries without any say on their use, their politics and their mandate. It will be remembered that demanding obedience and levying troops from others was a characteristic of the old feudal and colonial systems. Those, in some manner, still continue, which is why the Security Council can feed where it has not furrowed and be warm where it has not woven.

That is the situation regarding some of these matters, and I thought it was useful to mention them.

The representative of one Member State used the word "inaccessible"; he said that the Security Council was becoming more and more inaccessible. And he is quite right. It is. But it is not simply a matter of the General Assembly's telling the members of the Council to make themselves more accessible, as the "S-5" are trying to do. This is quite clear in the Charter itself: Articles 31 and 32 are very clear that a Member State whose interests are affected has to speak in the Security Council.

Article 31 does say that the Security Council has the discretion to decide whether the interests of that Member State are affected. But once it is clear that its interests are affected — this is very important — the Security Council has absolutely no discretion to prevent it from speaking. This is the clear, legal meaning of Article 31, and yet the Charter cannot be implemented.

As we all know, the non-permanent members, both pre-1965 and post-1965, those that are elected, have not been able, and are not able, in any way to restore the balance of the Charter, to ensure that Articles 31, 32, 44 and so many others are actually implemented.

Now, the same representative who referred to the inaccessibility of the Security Council also said, again very correctly, that the General Assembly had to

provide inspiration for reform of the working methods. But the point is this: the General Assembly has been doing its best to do that, and has been doing it since the famous resolution 267 (III) of 14 April 1949, and yet to no effect over all these years.

The S-5 draft resolution does not even go as far as resolution 267 (III). The draft resolution simply invites the Security Council to do certain things. What if the Council rejects the invitation repeatedly, as it has been doing for more than half a century? Quite clearly, the non-permanent members have not been able to carry forward any improvement in working methods.

One of the leading lights of Uniting for Consensus also mentioned the problems, the double standards, the non-analytical reports, the closed-door sessions, the lack of coordination with the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and so on. To our mind, that criticism is unfair. Members of the Assembly may ask why I am indulging in paradox. It is unfair because he is saying, on the one hand, "This is what is wrong with the Security Council", and, on the other hand, that the solution is more non-permanent members, or more non-permanent members who could be re-elected, precisely those members that have not been able to check all of this.

In other words, that representative is simply expressing, to use his own words, "great dissatisfaction". But he is quite satisfied to live with that dissatisfaction. He is quite satisfied with the euphonious sound of what the representative of another Member State said, about continuously criticizing the Security Council, year after year, making the same criticism, quite satisfied with the annual ritual of this debate, in which one has one's say and goes home.

On the other hand, there are those who argue in favour of a new principle of trying out something new, of electing members within the group of permanent members who would then be held accountable for restoring and maintaining the Charter balance, for preventing encroachment, and for improving working methods, and who would be held accountable through repeated review mechanisms. The criticism made by those who criticize the Security Council from that position is surely at least to that extent fair, because they are proposing a way forward, a way out.

The same leading light of Uniting for Consensus said that there should be representation, but no representation among the permanent members; that there should be checks and balances, but nothing to check or balance the permanent members; that there should be democracy. Here I was reminded of Lycurgus, the great lawgiver of the Spartans, who, when somebody asked him "Why do you not set up a democracy?", responded "Why do you not first set up a democracy in your own home?" Because democracy, like charity, really begins at home.

But, even if we take this principle of democracy, another member of Uniting for Consensus said that democracy did not mean leaving the winner in all perpetuity. However, he forgot address himself to this question: does democracy mean leaving the untrammelled power of a few also for all perpetuity, or should something be done about it?

Similarly, another member of Uniting for Consensus said that there must be continual elections and that, since non-permanent members are elected, that was the only way of ensuring accountability. The point is, I would be the first to agree, that elections are a necessary condition. But surely they are not an assumed condition of accountability. Are the non-permanent members accountable? And if so, to whom? Do even the regional groups, which can put forward clean slates, always find the non-permanent members accountable? Does the Non-Aligned Movement find all its members accountable? Therefore, accountability is something much more than simply elections.

Elections are necessary, of course. That is why I am saying that those who are elected to be among the permanent members have to be subjected to repeated reviews through a self-sustaining review mechanism. They also have to be subjected, possibly through some amendments to Chapter II, to the right of recall, the oldest democratic principle.

But we cannot simply say "Let us go on with some kind of short-term interim model — short-term in terms of the number of years that a member serves — or purely the expansion of non-permanent membership", and expect to change the state of affairs in any manner whatsoever. That is the entire crux of the issue, which does not mean that we are not prepared to look at all models.

One member of Uniting for Consensus said that we should not mention anything that would prejudge the final outcome, and then went on to contradict himself by saying that we should have expansion only in the non-permanent category. We are not doing that;

we are saying "Let us see how we can take elements of every model that has so far been presented and see how, on this basis, we can negotiate". I shall come to this subsequently to explain in further detail what this would really imply.

The thing is this: we have a situation in which the Security Council truly has become not very satisfactory in what it does. It has reached a point at which certain reform of the Council becomes very necessary in itself. There used to be in the Council a time when the content went beyond the phrase, but today the phrase goes beyond the content. There was a time when its reach was beyond its grasp, but today its grasp is more than its reach. There was a time when the substance was more than style; today, the style is more than substance.

I referred earlier to Mr. John Bolton. His book, *Surrender Is Not an Option*, has a very interesting statement on page 255: "the Security Council actually does not do most of its jobs well". Those are his words. On page 355 he says that the Security Council actually massages the problems but does not resolve them. That is not my phrase. The greatest critic of the General Assembly and its oversight, the proponent of untrammelled power of the Security Council, actually says that the Council only massages problems and does not resolve them.

The only time that the General Assembly really was able to provide some working method was in its famous resolution 11 (I) of 24 January 1946, in which it laid out a procedure for the process to select the Secretary-General. Bolton's book is very interesting, because it has a whole chapter on the selection process. It makes it clear that that General Assembly resolution has been only partially observed, because the selection process that he describes is really almost conspiratorial. It leaves aside all the non-permanent members, and even reduces the say of several permanent members.

The picture that Bolton paints — in a long chapter — of the process to select the Secretary-General shows that the functioning of the Security Council on this vital issue has been totally dismal and dysfunctional. This is the irony, the real paradox of our time, because this picture validates the unsuccessful attempt by the General Assembly to have a greater say and oversight in this selection process. The real irony, the real paradox, is that the greatest critic of General Assembly oversight and its role provides its strongest proof; he becomes, by implication, the strongest supporter of General Assembly oversight and a General Assembly role in the process. In short, unless some radical steps are taken, I do not see how this process can be carried to a successful conclusion.

Now let me come to the details of what we would propose. I refer first to draft resolution A/61/L.69, on which so many comments have been made. It was precisely because of the opposition of a tiny minority of countries, as a result of which the mandate given to you initially, Mr. President, was supposed to be without any reference to intergovernmental negotiations, that the draft resolution became necessary. Its achievement was quite simple: it enabled the mandate to be very clear on intergovernmental negotiations, which would be concrete, result-oriented and based on the progress made at the sixty-first session and on the positions and proposals of all countries.

Let me say here that one permanent representative made two points on which we are in full agreement.

One point was that any solution that does not address Africa's concerns is not worth the candle. That is correct, because, as the Bible also says, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. So those who have borne more than their share of the burdens and sorrows of the world should have a place of dignity in the Security Council.

The second point that that permanent representative made was that he is prepared for the launch of intergovernmental negotiations, and that therefore we need to agree on the content on which we are to negotiate. The representative of another Member State, a former facilitator, said that we have now come to a bridge, and that therefore the practical point is how we are to cross it, because, if we do not arrive at a practical solution, it will become like the bridge too far. We need to see how to proceed.

In that regard, permanent members and members from several other regions have supported permanent membership for G-4, including India, and we express our appreciation to them. But there has been a general view that the way to arrive at an optimal solution with the widest possible support is by launching concrete intergovernmental negotiations. The question is how to do it. And here, instead of speaking on behalf of some African countries and small States, I think it is much more advisable to listen to what the representatives

actually said. Many of them — from Africa, from the small States and the small island developing States — made it very clear.

We have a blizzard of variables. Therefore, on what basis do we start intergovernmental negotiations? The representatives to whom I have referred made it very clear that, through an objective, transparent process and method, we have to find out what are the elements — or, at any rate, if I may add, the elements grouped in the different packages — that actually command wide support, because only on the basis of that legitimation can there be intergovernmental negotiations. This is crucial. Intergovernmental negotiations have to be on a basis that has a certain legitimacy, and there is no other legitimacy.

Some mentioned a questionnaire or straw poll, and I am sure there could be other ways of doing it. But there has to be an objective and transparent process. I think this is perfectly reasonable. It is without prejudice to the positions of any Member State. It does exactly what the mandate says — that is, that on the basis of the progress achieved, which is the facilitators' reports, on the basis of the positions and proposals of all States, we have to arrive at certain elements, or a package, on which we can then negotiate. And this has to be done through an objective, transparent method.

The question is this: in this case, how are we to give a certain impetus or stimulus to the process? With that in view, we thought that we could consult with Africa about something on these lines to begin with. The reason for this is that some African countries had requested of us earlier that they would like to be consulted before we proceeded further on that.

Another former facilitator also spoke and said that we needed a "text" — and I am quoting his word exactly — on which to negotiate. He also referred to the multiple identities of one of the Member States. He forgot one identity, which is that of the inquisitor. What we have is a Member State that says clearly and categorically that we must move forward at present only on consultations — there should be no negotiations at all. That representative spoke very forcefully. Actually, he reminded me a little of Colonel Pickering in the Broadway musical *My Fair Lady*, who said, "I'd rather have a new edition of the Spanish inquisition". This was really an inquisitorial approach, in which he excoriated a number of his colleagues for actually co-sponsoring draft resolution A/61/L.69, saying that that was circumventing the Ezulwini Consensus. And then, of course, he went on to actually mention — approvingly and certainly without comment — the interim model, which circumvents both permanent membership and the veto, without saying that this circumvents the Ezulwini Consensus. He was, in a sense, really circumventing his own circumvention.

The point is this: we do not wish to be drawn into a debate about whether he had proprietary rights on Africa, because that is for the African Group to determine. What we are interested in here is whether he had even less proprietary rights on logic. He then went on to actually say that there should be more than a two-thirds majority, on which the Ezulwini Consensus is entirely silent. Thereafter, he said that we — the G4 group, the African Union, the Uniting for Consensus group and the so-called small five group — should all reach what he called a collective understanding, but without, obviously, touching the Ezulwini Consensus — to which he is totally attached — and without negotiations — to which he is totally opposed — possibly though a mystical meeting of minds.

He also went on — I mean, it was really a welter of contradictions — to say that, as I said earlier, we had been asked by the African States for consultation beforehand. Here, he reminded me really of Nagaina in the short story *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, in Kipling's *Jungle Book*, where Nagaina said, "If you move, I strike. If you don't move, I strike". That means that if you do not consult us beforehand, that is bad, but, if you consult us beforehand, that is also bad.

The representative of that Member State also spoke of civilizational representation and values. Such matters are very important. We have the highest respect for all civilizations, including the one he comes from. But, one of the elements in that civilization, if we remember, was actually the art of embalming corpses for the long term, which are now called mummies. I hope that he does not want to propose that civilizational element, namely, that we should embalm and mummify Security Council reform for a long time to come. I do not think that would be acceptable to us, for the simple reason that the United Nations has sometimes been unfavourably compared to the Tower of Babel. The fact that it has many languages and views is a source of its strength: it is strengthening and

it is life-giving. But, on the other hand, the language of the mandate you, Mr. President, have is very clear: we must have intergovernmental negotiations, not consultations. Therefore, if it becomes a Tower of Babel, in the sense that language itself becomes babble, then we will find ourselves in a very difficult situation.

I therefore think that it is very important that we realize the difference between friction and obstruction. Friction is a positive thing. The warmth of debate is as much a part of hospitality as the warmth of the fire. We know from classical physics that friction is important for optimal forward movement. The ship requires the friction of the water as it moves forward. The train requires the friction of its sliding wheels on the rails as it moves forward. This is elementary in classical physics. But if, on the other hand, you replace friction with total obstruction, then what we will have will be the ship and the train simply rotting and rusting, and we will not get anywhere at all.

I therefore think this is a very important thing: that we actually move on to negotiations. Psychologically, I can, of course, understand that for many the prospect of negotiations is a daunting prospect. It is daunting because it means navigating through multiple tensions. But inaction is politically unacceptable and morally suspect.

I am sure that I have taken a lot of time. I think I should now conclude. But, really, the point is that we look forward to your starting a process, Mr. President. We have given many suggestions. Many Member States -- especially small States, which are in the majority, and small island States — have spoken very clearly. We need really to move forward on this issue. We need to move forward. And for that, for any period of change, an increased charge of energy is required. I am confident that the Assembly and the United Nations will have precisely that increased charge of energy, which will enable us to move forward on Security Council reform.

The President: I thank Ambassador Sen, whose intervention has proved that, even if he can be extremely long, he is not boring.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Just a few hours ago, I returned from Antarctica and Chile's Patagonian glaciers, where I accompanied Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his delegation. However, despite the fact that I returned barely some hours ago, I did not want to miss this important debate — leaving behind the cold of Antarctica for the heat of the debate on the reform of the Security Council, as Ambassador Sen has referred to it with his customary warmth. I shall not refer to Bolton as much as he has. I hope that Ambassador Sen will soon refer to my book on Iraq and the Security Council, which will be published in a few months, as often as he has referred to Bolton's.

Turning to the issue that the President has convened us to debate, I would like to begin by thanking the Permanent Representative of Indonesia for introducing to the General Assembly the report (A/62/2) of the Security Council covering the period 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007. I also wish to thank the Chinese delegation for writing the introductory chapter to the report.

Several of my colleagues here know that Chile has been a consistent promoter of a comprehensive reform of the United Nations that, in reaffirming the purposes and principles of the Charter, serves to increase the Organization's credibility and legitimacy. We have already taken significant steps towards that end, but they are not enough. The challenge of reforming the Security Council is key to the overall process of United Nations reform. This was stated by heads of State or Government in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

Indeed, the current composition of the Security Council does not correspond to the international realities of the twenty-first century. Clearly, the organ responsible for safeguarding international peace and security should be more representative and democratic. It should envision an expansion in its membership that would favour developing countries, including those of Latin America and the Caribbean, and it should adopt more transparent and participatory working methods.

During the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the discussions on Security Council reform gained fresh momentum. Thanks to the confidence vested in the work of a group of facilitators, in which I was honoured to take part, and the flexibility of delegations, there was progress concerning the idea of exploring an alternative approach that does not involve abandonment of anyone's ideal positions or proposals.

Indeed, the consultations and discussions covered by the report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/61/47), adopted by consensus by all its member States, demonstrated that the status quo is not

acceptable. For this reason, a compromise solution would be a viable way to end stagnation and to move forward on the vital enlargement and reform of the Council.

Chile believes it is time to embark on an effective process of intergovernmental negotiations and thus to test, in practice, the flexibility expressed by the whole membership and the viability of the recommendations contained in paragraphs d and e of decision 61/561. A new series of consultations would be unproductive and would distance us from the objective of reform. Without constructive, practical, results-oriented negotiations, there will be no reform, and we will then face the dilemma of acting to achieve consensus or of waiting perhaps decades to regain the current momentum of openness and goodwill demonstrated by a considerable majority of Member States during the previous session.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

That is the debate, and that is the dilemma we need to face in the coming weeks and months. Chile will always be available to make its contribution to the building of a consensus required for comprehensive and successful reform of the Organization, and of the Security Council in particular. Chile aims, in particular, at an effort of compromise and agreement. That has always been our policy when faced with complex issues that can divide us. The President of the Assembly can rely on our support.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): Allow me to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening these plenary meetings on this very important issue and welcoming his giving priority to Security Council reform as one of the key items during his stewardship of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I thank Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia for introducing the annual report of the Security Council (A/62/2), and I congratulate the Indonesian presidency of the Council, which is in the midst of a successful Council leadership this month.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, and her facilitators, namely the Permanent Representatives of Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Tunisia and the Netherlands, for their selfless and tireless efforts to move the process of Security Council reform to where we are now. My delegation hopes that the letter and the spirit of the open and transparent consultations on this matter conducted during the previous session will continue, with renewed vigour, to pervade this session.

In the annual report of the Security Council, my delegation takes note of the ongoing efforts by the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions to find ways of improving the report. We still feel that the strictly factual annual report needs more substance, such as analytical content, which non-members find more valuable since official records are available to document events in the Council. We are hopeful that the Working Group, currently chaired by Slovakia, will be up to the task and will come up with future refinements along the lines just mentioned.

My delegation, just like those of other Member States, firmly believes that reform of the United Nations is in order and that such reform must be pursued now if the United Nations is to remain faithful to what its founding fathers wished it to be. Such reform would not be complete without Security Council reform. We reiterate our strong belief that Security Council reform is critically and urgently needed and that demands for it have become irresistible. We must not forget that in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, our heads of State and Government made it clear that they "support early reform of the Security Council — an essential element of the overall effort to reform the United Nations" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*). In that regard, my delegation takes this opportunity today to highlight the following points.

First, we must build on the progress achieved thus far, particularly at the sixty-first session, by seriously considering the various proposals at hand and working doubly hard to achieve concrete positive results, including through intergovernmental negotiations, at this session. We should take advantage of the momentum. We should endeavour to reach agreement on reform issues where we can, without further delay, and later take up issues where we cannot. In short, reform proposals which can be adopted now must be approved now.

Secondly, an area where possible agreement can be reached without much debate is on the working methods of the Security Council. My delegation believes that improvement of working methods is

essential and is an integral part of Security Council reform. The issue of access, particularly relating to the provisions on, or regarding due process for, States under Security Council review, as well as issues related to consultations, transparency and coordination or cooperation with other organs of the United Nations, should be included in whatever intermediary arrangements may be agreed upon. Pragmatic changes in working methods are the best hope at the moment for meaningful change in the Security Council. We must, forthwith and without any further delay, use every opportunity to accomplish as soon as possible reform on working methods. It bears stressing that, pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council acts on behalf of all Member States. Hence, due process, accountability and transparency demand that its working methods serve and fulfil such elements.

Thirdly, on the issue of enlargement, my delegation fully supports the enlargement of the Security Council in both categories of membership, based on equitable geographic distribution reflecting the geopolitical realities of today. The United Nations must truly be the world's model for a fully functioning participatory democracy. It would be a contradiction in principle and in practice and a travesty of justice if the membership of the Security Council, one of the principal organs of the United Nations given the important task of maintaining peace and security, did not reflect the prevailing context of its existence. We hope that, at the very least, general agreement among Member States can be achieved on this issue during this session.

My delegation prays that the General Assembly — through political will and determined, sustained and unceasing effort — can come up with an outcome based on this practical approach before the end of the sixty-second session. We look forward to intensive discussion, consultation and negotiations on these very important issues during the sixty-second session. My delegation assures the President of an equally determined, sustained and unceasing contribution in that regard.

Mr. Bródi (Hungary): Allow me, first of all, to thank the President for convening these meetings for a joint debate on the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/62/2) and on the issue of Security Council reform. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, President of the Security Council for the month of November, for his presentation of the Security Council's report yesterday morning.

We believe that the report is an important instrument in the dialogue among the general membership on the work of the Security Council. It strikingly reflects the huge workload of the Council and the wide scope of the issues it has to tackle in discharging its mandate. A number of Member States, however, have expressed the view that the report could be improved and made more relevant. In the view of our delegation, that illustrates the need to find other complementary means of interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Comprehensive reform of the Security Council constitutes one of the most important elements of the overall reform of the United Nations. Without it there cannot be meaningful reform of the Organization. On that point, I guess, Member States are overwhelmingly agreed.

During the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, many creative and useful proposals and ideas emerged with regard to Security Council reform, but substantive progress once again proved to be elusive. The consultations and deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, which have been going on for more than a decade, have resulted in a clear picture with regard to the positions of Member States. In our view, a mere continuation of those discussions in the same format would be a waste of resources and time. We must take the process a step further.

The time has come to start structured and results-oriented intergovernmental negotiations on the basis of a flexible and creative mandate that takes into account all the views expressed by Member States. The efforts of the former President of the General Assembly and the reports that resulted from her initiatives should be followed up during the current session of the General Assembly. Member States should try to come to an agreement on an effective framework for negotiations. We have no doubt that an agreement on such a framework will require creativity, flexibility and political will on the part of Member States.

We agree with the President of the General Assembly that in identifying the negotiables we ought

to be guided by the latest report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/61/47). We also agree that that process is the primary responsibility of Member States.

In sum, Hungary believes that comprehensive intergovernmental negotiations that tackle both the issue of expansion and the improvement of the working methods of the Security Council and are based on a transparent and flexible mandate defined by the General Assembly offer the best way forward at this stage. We are sure that, under the guidance and leadership of the President of the General Assembly, the sixty-second session will produce a breakthrough in finding an acceptable way forward on Security Council reform. We pledge our support to that effort.

Mr. Cheok (Singapore): Allow me to thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia for introducing the report of the Security Council (A/62/2). I also wish to express my gratitude to the Permanent Representative of India for his kind words about Singapore.

It was difficult to prepare for this debate, because we have been discussing this issue for so long. I think that many of us have even found ourselves repeating similar statements over the past two years. I think that it is time to try to break out of this cycle of repetition. I am not saying that the discussions over the past few years have been wasted. Ideas and opinions have been raised and debated. The positions of the African Union, the Group of Four, the Uniting for Consensus group and the so-called small five group are well known. Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, encouraged the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council to play an active role in exploring options. The five-facilitator and then the two-facilitator processes helped shed light on the complexities, as did draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1.

Obviously, there remains a divergence in views. No position has managed to garner consensus so far. But I think that what we have established is that the status quo is unacceptable for most. In the last days of her presidency, Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa presided over the unanimous call for the General Assembly to consider how concrete results may be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations. The objective is clear, but the way to achieve it is not. Our challenge, therefore, is to find an acceptable way forward.

I am not advocating a specific course of action; nor am I championing any particular outcome. I am merely trying to assess the situation dispassionately. It appears to us that there are two main ways of moving the process forward. One option is for a group of countries, of whatever persuasion, to put forth a draft resolution for consideration and negotiation. That would set the parameters for discussion and allow members to calibrate their approach and express their concerns or support accordingly. With a concrete proposal, we would have the beginnings of a complex negotiation.

Given the issue, however, there may be strong resistance to any proposal coming from just one set of countries. Perhaps divisiveness could be lessened if the President of the General Assembly assumed a direct role in seeking a solution acceptable to the broader membership. I recognize that that is putting a huge responsibility on the shoulders of the President. But the reality is that the facilitators processes have led to a number of views and opinions. Taken individually, those ideas run the gamut.

Are there other impartial players here who can bring those ideas together in a coherent whole that is broadly acceptable to most? Most delegations, mine included, have already taken positions in this debate. On the other hand, a process on expansion, and perhaps on working methods, that is driven by the President of the General Assembly may have the requisite impartiality.

I stress that I am not advocating a particular approach. Obviously, Singapore is a small country with no aspirations for permanent membership. I do, however, champion the interests of small States. Small States have little opportunity to serve regularly on the Security Council. Some may never even serve at all. Therefore, reviewing and improving the Council's working methods is equally important. In short, regardless of how we decide to move ahead, discussions should not simply be geared to accommodating the interests of the larger countries and the middle Powers. The views and interests of small States, which make up the majority of the United Nations, should also be taken into account. The best way to do that is to make sure that any discussions or negotiations are open, transparent and inclusive.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): I would like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, President of the Security Council for the month of November, for his presentation of the annual report (A/62/2) of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

During the period under review the international community has continued to face numerous challenges that directly relate to the Security Council's main sphere of responsibility: the maintenance of international peace and security.

The credibility of the United Nations will always be measured by the Organization's ability to adequately respond to threats in any region of the world. No organization is better equipped to deal with those issues. The United Nations should lead global efforts to address global challenges, which demand global solutions. At the same time, we need to take further steps down the path of reforming and improving the mechanisms of the United Nations, in order to make the Organization more efficient, more effective and more relevant in the twenty-first century.

We hope that the process of Security Council reform, which is the key element in the process of renewing the United Nations, will be expedited and that it will eventually yield tangible results. Making that body more representative and balanced, and its work more effective and transparent, especially with regard to decision-making, is vital in adapting the United Nations to the global realities of the twenty-first century.

With regard to the specific aspects of Security Council reform, Ukraine's position is based on the following principles. First, Security Council reform should be implemented in strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Secondly, the enlargement of the Security Council is to be carried out in both categories, the permanent and the non-permanent. We support increased representation in that body for developing countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Thirdly, as the composition of the Group of Eastern European States has more than doubled over the past decade, it should have an additional non-permanent seat. Fourthly, the reform of the Security Council should result in the improvement of its working methods. Those countries that contribute most to the Organization — militarily, diplomatically and financially — should be more involved in the decision-making process of the Council. Fifthly, the use of veto by the permanent members of the Security Council has to be limited.

We recognize the significant progress made by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council during previous sessions of the General Assembly. We welcome its decision to continue to work during the sixty-second session. We also support the launch of an intergovernmental negotiating process on the reform of the Security Council.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Let me first express Norway's appreciation for the President's timely initiative to hold this debate now. We believe it is important to build on the progress made over the past year on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. The two reports by the facilitators of the President's predecessor (see A/61/47) have offered valuable ideas as to the way forward and have generated important momentum. Now is the time to take advantage of that momentum and bring the discussion on reform forward.

We have made our position clear during previous consultations, and it remains the same. Norway's main priorities are to ensure that the Council operates coherently and efficiently and that the composition of the Council reflects the current configuration of the membership of the United Nations. Consequently, we support expansion in both categories. We would, however, welcome any constructive proposals that could break the current deadlock. At this stage I would therefore like to make the following points.

First, if we are to succeed in completing the reform process initiated by our political leaders at the 2005 World Summit, we need to look for a process that can move us ahead. While we the Member States need to show flexibility and seek compromise, it is also our view that in order to succeed we need to establish a process that commands the broadest possible support in order to ensure a legitimate and credible outcome.

Secondly, we need concrete proposals in order to maintain focus and move the discussions forward. In that respect, we are open to discussions that do not prejudge any final arrangements.

Thirdly, it is our view that the President of the General Assembly should guide this transparent and inclusive process, ensuring the active participation of all Member States in an intergovernmental process.

The overarching objective for Norway is to find solutions that will secure the continued legitimacy of the Council and provide broader representation for the various regions, without at the same time compromising the efficiency of the Council. Norway is open to discuss all proposals that aim at achieving that. Reform is timely and necessary, and we appeal to all Member States to show flexibility and to be open-minded.

Mrs. Silkalna (Latvia): Allow me to begin by thanking the President of the Security Council for introducing the Council's annual report (A/62/2). While it lacks analytical content that might have stimulated more substantive debate on this item, the report is useful as a reference document.

With regard to the next agenda item, we thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate on an integral aspect of United Nations reform. As the position of my delegation on the substance of Security Council reform has been outlined in previous debates, I will limit myself to brief remarks on process.

Consideration of Security Council reform has taken place for well over a decade. We are all aware of the complexity and sensitivity of the issue and the need for a steady approach. At the same time, the lack of concrete results in this aspect of reform has had a corrosive effect on other ongoing processes within the United Nations.

We therefore note with appreciation the progress achieved during the sixty-first session whereby Member States were widely consulted on the question of Security Council reform. The resulting report adopted by the Open-ended Working Group (A/61/47) reveals the extent of support for renewed efforts towards Security Council reform and gives us a solid basis for carrying forward during this session. In our view, the stage has been reached where the General Assembly can and should begin preparations within the current session for intergovernmental negotiations.

My delegation has full confidence in the leadership and wisdom of the President of the Assembly to identify the most suitable format for such preparations. We pledge our support to him in this endeavour so that momentum for Security Council reform is maintained.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): At the outset, let me join the previous speakers in thanking Ambassador Natalegawa, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for presenting the report of the Security Council (A/62/2) to the General Assembly. This document is a testament to the increasing challenges that the Security Council, the key body of the United Nations system, is facing.

Recent reports of the Security Council show clearly that the number of issues on its agenda continues to grow and that the burden on the shoulders of its members, both permanent and non-permanent, gets heavier and heavier. Those issues relate to major regional conflicts and cross-cutting challenges to our common security, including the fight against terrorism and against the proliferation of arms of mass destruction. Therefore, it is in the interest of all United Nations Member States that the Security Council be able to act in an open, transparent, effective and, last but not least, a more democratic manner.

As many speakers before me have already underlined, the Security Council has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security, as stipulated in the Charter. At the same time, the work of the Council would not be successful without the support of the broader membership. The real commitment of all Member States and their active involvement is in this respect crucial for the successful fulfilment of the role of the Council. The conclusion could not be clearer: a reform of the Security Council is already overdue and is essential.

The question of the involvement of Member States is first of all directly related to the question of the improvement of the Security Council's working methods. In other words, achieving the goal of the effective functioning of the Council is not possible unless this important subject is appropriately addressed.

Over the past 14 years, the Czech Republic has repeatedly expressed its view that the current challenges we are confronting can be properly addressed only through structural reforms of the Security Council. These reforms should in our view encompass all well-known elements: the expansion of membership in both categories, better representation and regional equitability.

All these issues have been debated in detail, and many useful ideas and concepts have been put forward. The Czech Republic has taken an active part in these debates and shares fully the conviction expressed by the overwhelming majority of Member States that the status quo is not an option.

With that conviction in mind, the Czech Republic has been among the sponsors of the so-called Group of Four proposal from July 2005. Without being stubborn or dogmatic, we continue to believe that the main elements of this proposal constitute a sound basis for our future deliberations. At the same time, I wish to underline our readiness to exercise the necessary flexibility in order to find common ground to serve as a new point of departure in formulating compromises acceptable to all.

We are strongly convinced that during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly we achieved some important progress thanks to the dedication and energy of the President's predecessor, Ambassador Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, as well as the work done by two groups of facilitators. Some innovative ideas were introduced in order to bridge differences between well-known positions and to move the discussions forward, inter alia, the concept of an intermediate approach. That concept in our opinion might open a new path towards a possible solution while avoiding an impasse of repetitive and unproductive discussions.

Let me underline the position of my country: we have to do our utmost to build on the momentum that was created during the Assembly's sixty-first session. It is encouraging that the vast majority of the United Nations membership, as has been demonstrated in this debate during the last two days, is ready to engage in this endeavour.

The Czech Republic is ready to consider all concrete proposals enabling us to finally get the reform process off the ground and to start intergovernmental negotiations during the Assembly's current session. Let me conclude by assuring the Assembly President of our full support in this challenging task of steering the discussions in the coming weeks and months.

Mrs. Intelmann (Estonia): May I first join others in thanking Ambassador Marty Natalegawa, President of the Security Council, for his presentation on the work of the Council. My delegation also appreciates the efforts made by Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, and her facilitators. We would like to thank them all for their important contributions towards moving Security Council reform forward.

We welcome the report of the Open-ended Working Group, and we support the decision to continue considering Security Council reform at the present session so that further concrete results may be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations. We feel that, given the comprehensive analysis of the situation carried out by the facilitators during the last session, the current session should not repeat this work and instead bring the process to a qualitatively new level.

Security Council reform remains a pressing issue in the overall United Nations reform process. The Council's reform must contribute to adding more legitimacy and credibility to its decisions and should not hamper its capability and effectiveness in adapting to the challenges of the twenty-first century. However, any reform needs the largest possible political acceptance; greater flexibility on all sides is urgently needed if we want to overcome the current stalemate.

Enlarged membership and equitable geographic representation should be the fundamental principles guiding the enlargement of the category of non-permanent members of the Security Council. As has been stated on many occasions, members of the Group of Eastern European States consider that any increase in the non-permanent membership of the Security Council should ensure an enhanced representation of that particular Group by the allocation of at least one additional non-permanent seat to the Group. Allow me to also recall that, since 1991, the Group has more than doubled its membership.

Estonia favours an increase of Security Council membership in non-permanent and permanent categories.

We also support the reform of the working methods, and we are convinced that the expansion and the reform of working methods should not be seen as inseparable. Indeed, efforts to improve the working methods should continue, irrespective of progress in other areas.

My delegation remains ready to participate actively in the results-oriented intergovernmental processes, including negotiations, in a very flexible manner. Given the fact that the reform process has

lasted for far over 10 years, it is important to create a new political momentum for possible negotiations. For that, high-level political involvement would be necessary from the very outset. The negotiations — if started — must be transparent and give all Member States equal opportunities to take part in the deliberations, building on the progress achieved and the positions of and proposals made by Member States. It is our conviction that under the able leadership of the present session, the reform process will move ahead and we will arrive at a successful outcome. The status quo is unacceptable, and we should make all attempts to move forward.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by welcoming the convening of this meeting to consider the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on it and increase in its membership. We are also grateful to the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Mr. Natalegawa, President of the Council, for having presented the Council's report to the Assembly.

Costa Rica agrees with the President of the Assembly that this should be an opportunity to reinforce the relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council. But that has not proved to be the case. Once again, we are taking part in a meeting that, for the vast majority of delegations, is merely another opportunity to point out the deficiencies of a document that is not the report that we would wish to receive and that, in general, lacks the information that Member States would like to discuss. In spite of the fact that the very broad majority of States, year after year, demands a report that would be in full accordance with the spirit of the Charter, in an ever-repeating rite we hear the same voices from the Council reassuring us that, contrary to our repeated demand, the report includes everything that it should include.

On earlier occasions, Costa Rica has made the point that the report should be a tool enabling the Assembly to learn about, evaluate and discuss the work of the Security Council. As was rightly pointed out by the Permanent Representative of Mexico, the functions of the Assembly and those of the Council are concurrent in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security. That was confirmed by the International Court of Justice in July 2004.

The practice of healthy interaction between the Assembly and the Security Council, far from weakening the Council, would strengthen it in the eyes of the international community and the world public opinion. The Council, and the United Nations as a whole, would thus gain greater legitimacy.

In making these comments and demands, Costa Rica is not naive. We recognize the limitations and difficulties that prevail when one is trying to report in detail on the work of the Council, even above and beyond the difficulty of finding agreement in a collegial body on the content of a report that covers that body's work. But those limitations should not prevent States that are not represented on the Council from having access to the necessary information in order to learn about and understand the decision-making process in a body that, in the last analysis, acts on behalf of the Members of this Organization, according to the provisions of article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter.

Costa Rica, as a newly elected member of the Security Council, and any other State that will serve in that body, would be better prepared and could make better contribution to the efficiency of the Council, if we were annually apprised of its work in a clearer and more focused form.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express our thanks for the generous support received by Costa Rica in its election to the Security Council. I would also like to congratulate Burkina Faso, Croatia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Viet Nam, also elected to serve on the Council in 2008 and 2009. Costa Rica has undertaken to represent States that will not be taking part in the deliberations and decisions of the Council. We will not forget that we are only temporarily non-permanent members of the Council and that we will always be permanent Members of the Assembly.

During the previous session, in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, we achieved important progress, partly thanks to the work of the former President of the Assembly and the distinguished facilitators that she appointed.

The position of Costa Rica on this process is clear. Security Council reform should be a means of achieving greater efficiency, transparency and legitimacy for an organ that acts on behalf of all Member States, and must never be an end in itself or a

means to gratify the particular interests or aspirations of any one Member State. We hardly feel that it is necessary to repeat the details of our position concerning Council reform, which are widely known in this Hall.

We would like to say, however, that we are firm in upholding the proposals that we have made through the "Small 5" group and that we believe that reform of the working methods is the measure that will provide the greatest benefit to the largest possible number of States represented in this Hall. I would add that the position of refusing to advance the reform of the working methods if there is no progress in the expansion of the Council is a trap that benefits just a few and denies the vast majority of States their rights and opportunities.

When it comes to the expansion of the Council, Costa Rica still harbours the hope that the membership ultimately will decide to support the enlargement of the Council by means of an increase in the number of non-permanent members. This, without question, is the most constructive solution for the great majority of States and the only one capable in the short term of achieving the broadest possible agreement among members of this Organization.

It has been two years since Costa Rica prepared a document, which has been circulated as official, under the title of the "cascade effect". In this document (A/59/856), we demonstrated in an incontestable fashion that permanent member status is the source of many privileges in this Organization; and today, as then, we remain convinced that it is not in the interests of the vast majority of the Assembly to extend to just a few the privileges that are already enjoyed by the victors of the Second World War.

Having said this, I would like to express our particular concern about the situation in Africa. For reasons known to us all, when we adopted the San Francisco Charter, the States present accepted an exception to the principle of sovereign equality of States, assigning special privileges to five Member States. On that occasion, practically the whole of Africa was excluded; only four African countries took part in that decision. Costa Rica believes that this historical injustice must be given special consideration in any model of Security Council reform, the primary objective being to restore equitable geographical representation.

Perhaps in this phase of the process, where we stand now, it might be advisable to review options that promote approaches which, like the African model, would transcend the shortsightedness of individual interests and re-establish the primacy of the concept of collective interests, which are the foundation of this Organization.

Costa Rica has never been timid in this matter. We participate actively, with the conviction that it is in our best interests and that of our peoples to have a dynamic, effective Organization that matches up to the challenges of the twenty-first century. We view the role of the presidency as one of facilitator of our debates, as well as the proponent of our consensuses. If we really wish to start a negotiating process that will ultimately enable us to have consensus-based reform of the Security Council, we must travel together along the avenues of dialogue in order to make progress in the quest for solutions reflecting our common interests and not solely the national aspirations of just a few.

The perfect is the enemy of the good. Our common objective is a more legitimate, democratic, representative and efficient Security Council, capable of responding effectively to the challenges and threats to international peace and security. This can only be achieved if we avoid falling into a pattern of confrontation or resort to force or the obsessive pursuit of national aspirations that, without question, will never be realized.

Costa Rica would appeal for us all to be idealistic in our aims and pragmatic in seeking the path that will lead us to our goals. Right now we offer our assistance, with a view to supporting actively any initiative directed to those ends.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan): I will be very brief, as many of the issues of interest to my delegation have already been raised by previous speakers.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the joint debate on agenda items 9 and 22. My delegation would like to convey its appreciation to Ambassador Natalegawa of Indonesia, current President of the Security Council, for his presentation of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

The issue of Security Council reform has been on our agenda for nearly a decade and a half. We have deliberated at great length on why the Security Council

needs to be reformed, and various ideas and proposals have been presented in that regard, including those on improving the working methods. The sixty-first session of the General Assembly, under the leadership of Her Excellency Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, generated good momentum and adopted an important decision on 17 September 2007. By decision 61/561, the issue of Security Council reform is to be considered during the present session, so that further concrete results may be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations, building on the progress achieved so far and on the positions and proposals made by Member States. My delegation welcomed the decision since, in our view, intergovernmental negotiations are the only way forward to address this sensitive and complex issue. Without such a process, the concrete ideas and proposals made over the years will remain just empty words.

My delegation would like to request the President of the General Assembly to initiate, without delay, the process of intergovernmental negotiations. We also request that he determine, through an objective and transparent method, the elements that command the widest support, so that they can serve as the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations. Only through this process, we believe, can comprehensive reform of the Security Council be achieved and its legitimacy and credibility enhanced. In this context, my delegation would like to reiterate its position that the Council should be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and allow for greater representation by developing countries, including better access for small States. We also reiterate our call for a comprehensive overhaul of the Council's working methods in order to make it more transparent and inclusive.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Mr. President, we thank you for your timely initiative in convening this meeting to address the annual Security Council report together with the wider issue of a comprehensive reform of the Council. We are convinced that under your able leadership we will be able to achieve tangible progress on this issue during this session of the General Assembly, building on the positive results achieved during the previous session. You can count on my delegation's full support and active participation in that important endeavour.

Regarding the Security Council reform, my delegation continues to believe that both its parts are equally important, namely, first, adequate change in the composition of the Council to better reflect the geopolitical realities of today's world and, secondly, a meaningful reform of the Council's working methods. Both of these aspects should be aimed at ensuring the Council's legitimacy, authority, effectiveness and representativeness. Like other delegations, we are also of the view that one part of the comprehensive reform should not be held hostage to the other. We should do our best to achieve maximal results on each of these two tracks.

During the sixty-first session, my delegation very much welcomed and supported the work of and reports by the facilitators. We believe that the concept of the intermediate or transitional approach, with a mandatory review to take place at a predetermined date, could be a meaningful way forward. What we need now is an intergovernmental process of negotiations that would lead to a possible road map out of the current impasse. We are looking forward to hearing your recommendations, Mr. President, on how this process could be taken forward.

On the issue of increasing the Security Council's relevance, authority and effectiveness, I would like to highlight at least one crucial aspect that we feel very strongly about. I refer here to conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. We believe that in order for the Council to play a significantly more relevant and active role with respect to the current threats and challenges to international peace and security, it must improve its performance in the area of conflict prevention. It is no longer enough just to react to emerging situations and ongoing conflicts or to come up with post-conflict remedies, such as United Nations peacekeeping operations. In this context, we sincerely welcome the recent initiative of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations Department of Political Affairs in order to strengthen its preventive diplomacy and mediation functions.

Along the same lines, I would like to highlight the importance of constant interaction and dialogue among the various parts of the United Nations system, in particular the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. I do not mean only regular, largely formal meetings of their respective presidents. We need to strive to achieve substantial and meaningful cooperation among the main United Nations bodies in areas of mutual interest so as to ensure complementarity and synergy in their

actions. We strongly believe that, instead of blaming the Security Council for taking up certain thematic issues, the other bodies should also be actively engaged in addressing those issues within the competencies entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations.

Finally, I would like to convey my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, the current President of the Security Council, for his comprehensive introduction of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. We are pleased to note that this year's annual report follows an approach aimed at improving the report, both in format and in substance, an effort that we have ourselves been very actively involved in. In this context, we also wish, once again, to thank the Chinese delegation for its hard work and constructive leadership in preparing the introduction to this year's annual report.

As we have recently said in the formal meeting of the Security Council before the adoption of this year's annual report, Slovakia strongly believes that the annual Security Council report to the General Assembly is a very important document. It should by no means be just a routine exercise of administrative or statistical nature. We believe there is a need — and also room — to go further in our efforts in this regard and to concentrate more on the substance of the report and on key political messages about the important work of the Security Council. This year, we have taken an important step in the right direction. We hope that we will continue in a similar fashion in the future, too.

The issue of the annual report has been among the issues discussed in detail this year in the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, which Slovakia has been chairing this year. Also, our efforts in the Working Group have been concentrated on full implementation of the Note by the President of the Security Council of 19 July 2006 (S/2006/507), which was prepared last year under the able Japanese chairmanship of the Working Group. Although this job is far from done, we are encouraged by the level of tangible progress in the implementation of the presidential note that has been achieved this year, including numerous practical documentation and procedural issues. We are committed to even further intensifying our efforts in this area with a clear goal in mind, namely, making the Security Council more open, more transparent and more effective, as well as enhancing the continuous interactions and dialogue between the Security Council and the United Nations Member States.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation, Honduras, as other delegations have done, expresses its thanks to Ambassador Natalegawa, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council covering the period from 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007. We have on other occasions had an opportunity to state that our country supports any attempted change that will update the work of the Council. It is our position that all United Nations bodies have to be more democratic and more participatory and should be designed to reflect a reality that is now rather distant from the arrangements that were conceived in their time as being appropriate and innovative.

Honduras, which is one of the original signatory countries of the Charter, attaches great importance to Security Council reform. For this reason, we have shared and sympathized with some positions that seek to incorporate geographical representation for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Africa and other countries, which we believe would make the body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security more balanced.

In this regard, we believe that the Open-ended Working Group that functioned during the last session did excellent work that should serve as guidance for the new tasks ahead of us. We recognize the great contribution of the facilitators and we share their worries and hopes. Their inputs have enriched our work. So, as more than one delegation has said before, the mechanics of their discussion and analysis should remain valid in the upcoming discussions that we shall have on this question.

We believe that adequate coordination between the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly is indispensable and vital. It is important to maintain the balance between the functions and powers of the main bodies of the United Nations. There should be proper collaboration and coordination that includes interrelationship and interdependence. We believe that all Member States agree with the issue of Security Council reform and have invested many years working on that issue. We must make progress and address reform in greater depth. The current world

situation demands that of us, and reality has imposed new criteria and values upon us.

All of us wish to see an organization that will keep pace with the rhythm of the times in which we live, an organization that over the years refines its actions in promoting the legitimate causes of our peoples. We all wish to see a Security Council that reflects the modern world and that will incorporate important recommendations to strengthen its work. We appreciate the work done and are sure there is full agreement on the need for reform. So let us accomplish that task on behalf of our nations and our peoples and in harmony with the Charter in order to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human beings, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

Mrs. Dibaco (Ethiopia): My delegation wishes at the outset to associate itself with the statement made by Angola on behalf of the African Group. My delegation would also like to express its sincere appreciation to the President of the Security Council for the month of November, Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, for presenting to the General Assembly the annual report of the Security Council.

The report of the Security Council, as contained in document A/62/2, is comprehensive and enables the Assembly to have a full picture of the activities carried out by the Council from August to July of this year. The statistics provided in the Council's report show a growing trend in its activities. In that regard, the report is informative and beneficial, although it would be more desirable to include an analysis of the Council's activities. We hope that in the future the report will be more analytical and will better reflect the issues dealt with by the Council in a substantive manner. We also hope that the report will be available in advance, so that the Assembly will have ample time to examine the issues and make meaningful contributions. Likewise, we expect that the format of the report will be addressed by taking into consideration the views expressed during the present debate.

The issue of Security Council enlargement and the principle of equitable representation are of critical importance to the overall reform of the United Nations. This overriding fact necessitates that the issue should be accorded the necessary attention and importance it deserves.

As it is well known, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, there were, on and off, attempts to provide momentum to the issue and keep it alive through formal and informal consultations among Member States and stakeholders. In that respect, my delegation appreciates the efforts of the Ambassadors of Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Netherlands and Tunisia for conducting continuous consultative meetings to exchange views on how to proceed with the reform process and make progress. Their reports have also been useful for building on what has been achieved and for continuing the consultations from where they left off. We expect the President of the current session to devote the necessary attention to the consultations by issuing appropriate guidance and direction, so that the issue will maintain momentum until solutions that are acceptable to all stakeholders are found.

Ethiopia firmly believes that the reform of the Security Council is vital to its capacity to act and its ability to deliver results. In that regard, improvement in the working methods of the Council is equally important. We firmly believe that, whatever consultations are intended to be conducted in the future, should be on the basis of transparency and inclusiveness. The interests of the various stakeholders in the issues should also be taken fully into account and deserve equal consideration. We hope that the Open-ended Working Group and others involved in facilitation tasks will give due recognition to that aspect of the consultation process and act accordingly.

In conclusion, we wish once again to stress the need for the reform of the Council to be accorded high priority during the current session. Ethiopia, as in the past, will continue to closely follow the issue and engage in consultations aimed at making progress and achieving tangible results through consensus.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Please allow me to make a few procedural remarks. Some have described the Security Council as one of the most conservative institutions in the world, referring to its working methods, its procedures and, above all, its membership. Others have called the Security Council one of the most effective organs of the United Nations.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Belgium observes each day that there is a grain of truth in both assertions. It follows — and this is my first comment — that any Security Council

reform will have to take into account two basic elements — the Council must adapt while ensuring that its effectiveness is maintained. In that connection, improvement in the working methods of the Council is certainly an important objective. Initial progress has already been achieved, but there still remain considerable challenges, especially regarding access to the Council by non-member countries, in particular those countries directly concerned by Council decisions. Other speakers before me have already raised that point, so I will not dwell on it.

Improving working methods, however important that may be, is not enough. As several colleagues emphasized yesterday and today, a further-reaching reform is necessary, more than ever. Dragging our heels on the issue would be tantamount to maintaining the status quo, which is not an option. The composition of the Security Council must better reflect the current geopolitical reality. Increased representation would help to give the Council greater legitimacy. That position seems to be shared by all. The question is, how to achieve it and how to break the deadlock.

During the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, as is illustrated in the latest report of the Open-ended Working Group, the key parameters for any Security Council reform were clearly identified and I wish to commend President Al Khalifa and the five and then two facilitators for the outstanding work they have done in that regard. My delegation believes that, with the work done in recent months, the political leeway and the legal requirements are sufficiently well-known.

It is now time to go on to the next phase: a phase of genuine intergovernmental negotiations within the General Assembly itself, the natural venue for such a process. The modalities for those intergovernmental negotiations should be defined as soon as possible.

For Belgium, as was stated by our Minister for Foreign Affairs to the General Assembly on 1 October (see A/62/PV.12), it is clear that in due course, consultations at the highest level — at the level of heads of State or Government, in capitals — will be inevitable if we wish to attain tangible results. My delegation believes that such consultations should be conducted by a single individual who would enjoy our full confidence: a high-level special envoy.

For Belgium, that does not mean outsourcing the debate from New York to various capitals, but rather ensuring the ownership, the active and direct involvement of our heads of State and Government in a debate, the strategic issues of which are known to all. In that way the special envoy would be acting as a catalyst who, supported by direct contributions from capitals at the highest level, would be in a position to unjam, facilitate, promote and speed up the process of intergovernmental negotiation.

On the basis of contact and consultations conducted directly with capitals, the special envoy should be in a position to submit to us a consolidated proposal that would enjoy the broadest possible support. That proposal would constitute the basis for a new round of intergovernmental negotiations within the General Assembly. It is for the General Assembly, and to the General Assembly alone, to take the final decision, which should take place before the end of its sixty-second session.

The debate on the reform of the Security Council has already taken up a great deal of time and energy. Only an innovative procedural approach can break the deadlock in which we currently find ourselves on this issue. Belgium is prepared to play its role.

Organization of Work

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that as the first item on Thursday, 15 November, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 48, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social and related fields", and agenda item 116, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", for the purpose of taking action on draft resolution A/62/L.11, entitled "Overview of United Nations activities relating to climate change". Also, I would like to inform members that the consideration of agenda item 50, "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order", which is scheduled as the fourth item for Thursday morning, 15 November, has been postponed to Monday morning, 26 November.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.51

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

51st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 14 November 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 122 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/62/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): At the outset, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this joint debate, which provides us a timely and useful opportunity to reflect on the reform of the Security Council. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, President of the Security Council for the month of November, for his introduction of the Council's annual report (A/62/2) to the General Assembly.

The report confirms once again the increasing work load of the Council, in which African issues have continued to be at the forefront of its agenda. It gives an accurate account of the work of the Council, although it could be more analytical. As has been underlined by many other speakers, there is still much room for further improvement in the working methods of the Council in order to enhance its transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. We therefore encourage the Council to continue its efforts to this end. At the same time, we should also continue to look into the working methods of the Security Council.

We are fully committed to the early reform of the Security Council in order to make it more representative, efficient, transparent and democratic, thereby further enhancing its legitimacy and credibility. Those widely shared general principles should continue to guide our efforts in the next phase of our work.

While focusing on the reform of the Security Council we should not overlook the revitalization of the General Assembly. The reform of the Council and the revitalization of the Assembly are inevitably two interrelated issues that should proceed separately but simultaneously.

Despite the divergence of views among the membership on the nature and modalities of achieving the reform of the Security Council, we managed to generate momentum and make positive progress during the sixty-first session, thanks to President Al-Khalifa and her facilitators. We must now build on that progress and show greater understanding, flexibility and cooperation — and thereby try to seek the widest possible agreement among the membership. Having said that, let me make a few observations on the way ahead.

First, we strongly believe that you, Mr. President, should continue your informal consultations with all interested parties. Your leadership, guidance and wisdom at this critical stage of our work are needed more than ever.

Secondly, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council should

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continue to be the main forum within which we should prepare the ground for an eventual intergovernmental negotiation. The crux of the matter is not how we label our meetings but to what extent we can be flexible and forthcoming with regard to the enlargement of the Security Council.

Thirdly, our future work should be guided by the report of Open-ended Working Group (A/61/47), and in particular the reports of the facilitators annexed to it. Those reports should be the basis of our future discussions.

Fourthly, in every stage of our work, we should take into account the views and concerns of small States and island States on the reform process, in order to garner the general agreement of the membership. Without their consent, there can be no reform.

Let me underline once again our readiness for an open-minded discussion under your able leadership, Sir, with flexibility, inclusiveness, transparency and constructiveness as the key words to be kept in mind.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): First, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia for presenting to the General Assembly the report of the Security Council for the period 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007 (A/62/2), which contains revealing facts regarding the ever-increasing workload and complexity of the issues before the Council.

The second agenda item under consideration today — "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters" — has attracted an even longer list of speakers to address the Assembly in the past two days. That is a clear sign of the great importance we all attach to the issue of Security Council reform.

The valuable work of the facilitators appointed by your predecessor, Sir, and the subsequent discussions in the previous session, have moved us further along on this item and have generated momentum which we cannot afford to squander. We find the proposed intermediate solution to be a possible way forward towards a compromise. We have to engage in negotiating a solution that will lead us to the goal we all share, namely, an efficient, effective and representative Security Council.

Let me take this opportunity to state once again the Slovenian position in a nutshell: we support the enlargement of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. We would also like to see a representative geographical distribution of seats, including an additional non-permanent seat for the Group of Eastern European States. We also believe there is a need for improvement in the working methods of the Security Council.

We hope that your leadership, Mr. President, and the necessary flexibility among the membership will bring us to a successful conclusion of the prolonged debates on the issue of Security Council reform.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): On behalf of the delegation of Nepal, I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the report of the Security Council (A/62/2) and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

The Security Council is one of the most important organs of the United Nations. Its responsibility and relevance in the maintenance of international peace and security need no elaboration. Unless we make the Council effective, we cannot achieve the objectives stipulated in the Charter. In view of the changing reality of our times and the complexities of the issues that confront the Council, its composition and working methods need improvement.

The reform of the Security Council is among the unfinished business on the reform agenda of the United Nations. Such reform should include the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Council and the improvement of its working methods. Reform measures should be aimed at further strengthening the Council's effectiveness and legitimacy in dealing with emerging threats to international peace and security, and at increasing more meaningful participation by the entire membership of the United Nations in that process.

Nepal supports the expansion of the membership of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. We feel that India, Brazil, Germany and Japan deserve permanent seats, while Africa should also be fairly represented in the expanded Council. The expansion in the non-permanent category should take into account the aspirations of smaller countries, especially those which regularly contribute to the work of the Council by sending troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions. We can also develop a membership rotation

mechanism for non-permanent seats, so that all Member States can be represented in the Security Council in rotation and can thus focus the energy, time and resources they are currently devoting to campaigning for membership on dedicating themselves to more productive activities in the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations.

Nepal attaches great significance to the work of the Council and has been responding to its call by sending troops to various peacekeeping missions around the world. Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of Nepal's continued participation in peacekeeping missions. It is currently the fourth largest troop contributor, participating in 13 United Nations missions with more than 3,000 troops and police personnel.

As a troop-contributing country, Nepal would like to see a more coordinated approach and a more clarified role towards troop-contributing countries in the working methods and decision-making of the Security Council. The Council can involve troop-contributing non-members in its work more proactively and more regularly.

We also favour substantive and tangible improvement in the working methods of the Council to increase its transparency and accountability to Member States, which it is supposed to serve. For example, the current method of excluding concerned Member States from the Council's consultations and briefings cannot be said to be highly transparent and inclusive.

There also needs to be a concrete improvement in the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, so that the two complement one another and do not compete for decision-making space. In particular, the General Assembly should be allowed to play its legislative role against the current practice in the Security Council of adopting resolutions of a legislative nature that apply to all Member States.

In the past session we agreed to move ahead on this agenda item, including through intergovernmental negotiation. We should not delay any further in making progress on this important issue. Nepal welcomes the idea of an interim arrangement to break the deadlock on this important matter.

As you stated in your opening remarks, Mr. President, the need of the hour is to agree on a process. The Open-ended Working Group can start negotiations on the content of a package for an interim arrangement, for which there seems to be a certain degree of desirability. Perhaps the Open-ended Working Group can develop a negotiating proposal. As it develops, that process needs to be further augmented with few rounds of informal consultations at the plenary, as we did with regard to most other agenda during the reforms last year. In conclusion, Nepal pledges to constructively engage in the reform of the Security Council with the members of the General Assembly and we are thankful for this initiative.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I do not have a prepared text. I will try to be as interactive as possible in my contribution.

First of all, I want to align myself with the statement made by Angola on behalf of the African Group.

My own remarks will be confined to the issue of reform of the Security Council. Various positions, as we all know, have been put forward. This process culminated in the two facilitators' reports, which have been discussed at length. These discussions led to a decision to the effect that we should build on the work of the facilitators and continue the process, including intergovernmental negotiations. My reading of that decision does not entitle us, does not obligate us to start intergovernmental negotiations straight away. Intergovernmental negotiations are one of the elements that we will be considering.

Therefore, we have not reached the stage where we are set to start intergovernmental negotiations. We have to consider the roadmap; we have to consider the elements that will form the basis of intergovernmental negotiations. I believe that this process can best be conducted within the framework of the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Security Council. Therefore, this process has to continue and we must build on it.

When we were considering the facilitators' report, I did point out that, as far as Africa is concerned, our position seems not to have been taken into account in either of the facilitators' reports, especially in the last one, with regards to the intermediary approach. I thus insisted that any negotiations, in order to be all-encompassing, must take into account all of the positions of the group. I am very glad that that also was the position taken by this

Assembly — that all positions advanced so far by the groups must also form the basis of negotiations.

It is therefore not correct, or arguably right, to single out one position and insist that this position should form the basis of negotiations to the exclusion of all other positions. In our effort to form an extremely comprehensive basis for negotiations, we have to ensure that all of the positions, plus the views of the two facilitators, are all considered as a whole.

In this regard, the African position has been well-articulated and is well-known: in brief, at least two permanent seats with a veto. The rationale behind this has also been well-articulated and is well-known. Africa is a continent that has no permanent seat, and we insist that this historic wrong be corrected. Some people have misunderstood us, thinking that we are adopting a maximalist approach, that we are saying to do this or nothing. But this is not our position. We are very articulate, our position is very well-reasoned and we hope and think that it can, along with other positions, form a basis for negotiations.

If we look carefully at the African position, one can see that it states that the two permanent seats that we are demanding should be given to the region, to Africa as a whole. But within the African context, we shall determine who will occupy those seats. We shall also have the right to recall our member, because, very often, a State campaigns to be on the Security Council, but, immediately after gaining this seat, sometimes the State in question simply pushes for its own interest and disregards the interests of the group. In this context, we want the African position not to be disregarded by whoever is elected to the Council. We insist on our proposal that there should be a built-in mechanism for recall.

Our position also emphasizes that the best criterion for joining the Security Council should not be how powerful the country is, in terms of political or economic power. We are not comfortable with arguments that say that "country A, because it is very powerful economically should qualify to be on the Security Council". This criterion is a bit false. Country B, which is not, at the moment, economically powerful, tomorrow can become so. Does this then mean that country B, once it attains that power, should now also qualify to be on the Security Council as a permanent member? In other words, we do not want to entrench the privileges that have led to the current fight. If the criteria to join are based on power, we are back to the situation of 1945.

To avoid all these configurations, we think that any country is entitled to be on the Security Council. This is why I want to examine the criteria in a very careful manner, so that whatever we conclude at the end of the day takes into account all positions and all interests of the countries concerned.

In a nutshell, what the delegation of Uganda is insisting upon is that this process of Security Council reform has not reached a stage where we can fully launch intergovernmental negotiations. There are many areas to consider, many loose ends to tie up and we can only do that if for now, under the President's wise guidance, this process is continued within the framework of the Working Group.

Lastly, let me also touch the issue of peacekeeping. We are very proud of the peacekeeping role played by the United Nations through the appropriate organs. I believe that whenever blue-helmeted personnel are seen, they represent the theme of peace. That does the United Nations proud. For the most part, peacekeeping operations are in Africa. But if we keep to the traditional role of peacekeeping — that is, carrying out peacekeeping where there is peace to keep — then, I am afraid, certain conflict situations may not be addressed.

Take the example of Somalia, where the situation has been bad. If we apply the traditional peacekeeping approach, the United Nations will not deploy in Somalia, since there is no peace to keep there. Does that mean that the United Nations will watch helplessly as slaughter takes place? Surely, the United Nations should be concerned. It should move beyond the traditional approach and even engage in robust peacekeeping: peacemaking as well as peacekeeping.

My country is proud to have played exactly that role. We have deployed in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the countries participating in the Mission are the only ones that are there. We knew the consequences of going into Somalia; we knew all these things. But if we had folded our hands and done nothing, it would have been a real abnegation of responsibility at the international level. So we deployed; we are there. And we know that our presence has reassured the people of Somalia that the international community cares.

Therefore, we call on the United Nations to examine its position on peacekeeping, to engage in peacemaking in Somalia, to encourage those countries that have pledged to deploy troops there and to give them all the logistics necessary to do so. However, I want to reassure the Assembly that Uganda is in Somalia for a noble cause and that we are not leaving the country, despite all these setbacks — despite the fact that we are there alone. We hope that, one day, others will join us for the sake of peace.

Mr. Piperkov (Bulgaria): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for this timely initiative. I would also like to join those who have expressed their gratitude to Ambassador Natalegawa, Permanent Representative of Indonesia and President of the Security Council, who presented the annual report of the Council (A/62/2). We understand the difficulties associated with the preparation of a report that goes beyond enumerating the Council's activities and meetings, and we encourage the Council to continue to strive to submit reports that fulfil the expectations and needs of Member States.

I would like to share with members some aspects of the Bulgarian position on the other agenda item before us, namely, the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

Reform of the Security Council is part of the international community's overall efforts to promote positive change and transformation of the United Nations in conformity with the new economic and political realities. Any reform will remain inconclusive unless it addresses the issue of improving the body that is at the core of the United Nations mission of maintaining international peace and security.

Security Council reform should enhance the representative character, as well as the effectiveness, legitimacy and transparency of the Council's activities. Expansion should be carried out in such a way as to ensure the Council's effectiveness and strengthen its capacities.

Regrettably, the debate on Security Council reform has consumed much energy and time over the years, with no apparent substantive result. We share the disappointment prevailing among Member States in that regard, although we do not think that our efforts have been in vain. Some progress has been made on the issue of working methods. Here, I would like to stress the contribution of the five countries sponsoring the relevant initiative. Their efforts have injected some impetus into the Council's efforts to achieve greater transparency and openness in its proceedings.

As to the issue of composition, Bulgaria believes that the Security Council should be expanded in both categories. We are convinced that some countries will be able to successfully perform the duties and responsibilities stemming from permanent membership, owing to their increased economic and political potential and their widely acknowledged international roles. Similarly, the increased overall number of Member States in recent decades — including those belonging to the Group of Eastern European States — points strongly to the need for expansion in the non-permanent category as well.

With regard to the non-permanent category, Bulgaria supports an expansion that would ensure maintenance of the balance between permanent and non-permanent members and of the equitable distribution of seats among the regional groups. We want to support a formula that takes into account the legitimate and justified aspiration of the Eastern European Group — whose membership has doubled over the past decade — to an additional seat in the non-permanent category.

My delegation welcomes the decision of the General Assembly, taken during the previous session, to consider the question of Security Council reform during the current session of the Assembly so that further concrete results can be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations, on the basis of the progress achieved so far, particularly at the sixty-first session, and the positions and proposals of Member States.

Bulgaria welcomed the idea of seeking innovative formulas. We are encouraged by the sense of flexibility shown by various delegations during this debate. We understand the arguments in favour of a so-called interim decision until the time is ripe for permanent solutions. Given the uncertainty regarding the final outcome of such an intermediate process, we are of the view that, should it be accepted, we must envisage necessary provisions that would make it subject to appropriate review. As the process advances, we stand ready to examine this and other initiatives that might help to give rise to widely supported ideas on the reform process.

Mr. President, I would like to assure you that, in seeking the right formula for reform of the Security Council, we will continue to rely on your wise advice and your able guidance in the process of defining the best way to move forward.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): I am taking the floor today to express my Government's position on the issue of structural reform of the Security Council.

Mongolia supports early reform of the Security Council aimed at making it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus further enhancing its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions. My country believes that there should be a just and equitable expansion of the Security Council in both its permanent and non-permanent membership categories, ensuring due representation for both developing and developed countries.

Expansion in the permanent-member category should address the dichotomy in the Council's composition as well as today's geopolitical realities. Factors such as a country's global outreach and its economic and political weight must therefore be taken into consideration. After all, permanent membership is not only a privilege; it is also a heavy responsibility. Mongolia thus supports the aspirations of Japan, Germany and India, which are willing and, we believe, well positioned to serve as new permanent members of the Security Council. Moreover, Africa and Latin America should be adequately represented on the Council.

My delegation supports the creation of additional non-permanent seats, which would reflect the changes in the Organization's membership in recent decades and would give small States greater opportunities to serve on the Council. In the same vein, my delegation does not support proposals to amend Article 23 of the Charter. The provision that retiring members of the Security Council shall not be eligible for immediate re-election has been instrumental in ensuring the rotation of Council members and the election of more countries to the Council than otherwise would have been the case. Needless to say, smaller States have been the main beneficiary of this rule.

I would like to add that we find objectionable any proposals that entertain ideas of establishing a third tier of membership in the Security Council. We believe that it would result in the devaluation and sidelining of the existing category of non-permanent members, and is not, as such, in the best interest of small States.

The improvement of working methods of the Security Council is an essential element of the reform process and one that is of particular significance for the majority of Member States. My delegation notes in this respect the work of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions to improve the working methods of the Security Council. Increased transparency, openness in the Council's work and better access for States that are not members of the Council, as well as enhanced accountability to the membership as a whole, can only enhance the authority of the Council and increase the legitimacy of its decisions.

Our deliberations over the years have revealed that all Member States share the view that no reform effort of the United Nations is complete without Security Council reform. Another point of universal convergence is the necessity to make progress on the Security Council reform track, as everyone agrees that the status quo is unacceptable.

I take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, for her remarkable leadership in steering the work of the General Assembly and in moving this vital reform dimension forward. Indeed, her efforts and those of the facilitators were instrumental in generating a unique momentum that has carried over to this session, as exemplified by the number of delegations that are taking the floor in this debate.

The last session of the General Assembly was marked by an extensive process of consultations that allowed delegations to engage in a focused exchange of views on every aspect of Security Council reform. But even more importantly, this process resulted in adoption by the General Assembly of a decision in which it decided that the question of Security Council reform should be considered during the current session of the General Assembly, so that further concrete results might be achieved, including through intergovernmental negotiations, building on the progress achieved so far, particularly at the sixty-first session, based on the positions of and proposals made by Member States.

My delegation takes the current debate as the beginning of the process that should yield concrete

results over the course of this session. We look forward, Mr. President, to hearing your suggestions and proposals on the way to proceed. Rest assured, Sir, that my delegation shall spare no effort to assist you in your efforts.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express thanks to and congratulate the representative of Indonesia for his presentation of the report of the Security Council in his capacity as President of the Council.

We do not intend to reiterate the exhaustive analysis set forth in most of the statements during this debate. However, we do believe that it is appropriate to stress the need to elaborate with greater emphasis on some factors that should be taken into account in order to contribute to the reform process in the United Nations, a reform that has been under way and addressed for more than a decade.

The majority of delegations recognizes that this is the right moment in which to make great changes in the current structure of the bodies of the United Nations, but we continue to observe the same non-convergent positions on one side and another. Many delegations have mentioned the fact that little progress has been made concerning reform of the Security Council and that the issue might not be worth the effort that has been made during all these years of debate.

The Bolivian delegation takes the view that most countries are fully in agreement as to the need to strengthen the authority of the General Assembly, which, given its broad democratic representation, should serve as a central axis of the Organization, thus averting interference from the Security Council in issues that are not strictly within its jurisdiction.

We all agree fully to the need to reform the Security Council. As far as Bolivia is concerned, it is extremely important that this body should have a more democratic membership. I would like to indicate what our vision is of the concept of a more democratic Security Council.

We take the view that the fundamental principle of democracy is the equality of all the components of the Organization. But when we have a Security Council in which there are countries with certain privileges in comparison to others, that is not democracy. Nor do we believe that the democratic composition of the Council can be notably improved by increasing the number of privileged members. When we talk about a democratic Security Council, we should think in terms of all its members having exactly the same rights, the same powers, the same obligations. That is democracy.

When we propose a more democratic membership, we are also speaking of a composition that would reflect broader regional vision, so that, through its legitimate representativity, it would become a genuine watchdog capable of safeguarding international peace and security. It is not possible to build a lasting peace when, at the same time, there are countries that threaten others with pre-emptive wars or wars of reprisal for any reason.

The current composition of the Security Council reflects the political situation of the last century, times in which the hegemonistic nature of the victors was clearly predominant. Today, we are living in a different era, in which we aspire to achieve complementarity for all countries, respect for human rights, respect for the self-determination of peoples, peaceful coexistence, without modern masters or modern slaves. It is natural that this new reality should be reflected in the structures of the United Nations.

We must not deceive ourselves by thinking that merely enlarging the Security Council would change the imbalance that is patent in the current structure. Even less effective would be an increase in the number of privileged countries with permanent membership status. We feel that, as long as there are countries on the Security Council with the right to veto, those countries will always be the ones to take the important decisions. In some cases those countries might consult with others that might come in as permanent or non-permanent members, but that is almost always done in isolation, without taking into account the general views of the Security Council, let alone those of the General Assembly. At present in this process of reform, it is necessary to expand the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council to make it more regionally representative.

Bolivia supports the initiatives aimed at analyzing and reaching consensus on limiting the scope of the veto — if the veto has to be maintained in order to preserve the unity and integrity of the United Nations. We have no doubt whatsoever that the United Nations was born with a body, with a head and with limbs; we do not seek to decapitate this Organization. For this reason, when conditions improve, we may be

able to talk about the elimination of the veto; but for the time being, we support the proposal to limit the scope of the veto.

The credibility of the United Nations in the international context is ever-shrinking, and we know that there is a single and very simple reason for this: no decision of the General Assembly, even if appropriate, is of a binding nature. The Charter of the United Nations does not grant this power to the General Assembly. I believe that if we really want to make progress in serious reform of the United Nations, we must face the need to introduce amendments to its Charter — amendments that would endow the General Assembly with powers to take decisions binding in nature, and therefore duly heeded and complied with by all countries without exception. For example, we know that the imbalance that prevails in the Security Council will always be maintained, regardless of whether its number of permanent members increases or not. If we wish the United Nations to become more democratic and more representative, we should endow the General Assembly with the power to review decisions vetoed in the Security Council, when appropriate. We would suggest that this proposal, together with others, should be analyzed in the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the United Nations.

We are not persuaded that this is the right time to embark on a dialogue of an intergovernmental nature. We believe that there is an inherent danger in this: the most powerful economic countries might exert pressure on countries that are the most economically needy in order to get them to comply and take certain positions on these matters. We believe that this matter should continue to be discussed and analyzed in a completely democratic and transparent fashion in the Open-ended Working Group analyzing United Nations reform.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I thank the President for organizing these consultations, which, following these two days of debate, have been very timely and useful. We have found a lot of common ground, even though it may not appear so at first sight. I also thank the President for his introductory remarks that are of fundamental importance for all of us in their political weight.

I was supposed to take the floor yesterday afternoon, and I wanted to be very brief and simply express a few remarks, because I thought that there was nothing really that I could add after those speakers. The position of the Uniting for Consensus group was fully presented. The Permanent Representatives of Mexico, Pakistan, Canada, Colombia, Spain and Costa Rica and this morning the representative of Turkey among others presented their views, which I fully share and support. I will quickly add that I fully support their guidance and leadership, and we are ready to move the process forward and keep the momentum going.

After having listened to the 45 minute speech by Ambassador Sen, the Permanent Representative of India, I feel that if we heed his call to give substantive inputs and to be more interactive and count on everyone's indulgence, we could elaborate a bit more and act more in the spirit of a constructive interactive approach.

First of all, allow me to begin by joining other Permanent Representatives in thanking Ambassador Marty Natalegawa, President of the Security Council, for his presentation of the annual report of the Security Council (A/62/2). As we have heard, the issue is very sensitive for the Council's membership, because it involves differing views on the wider picture, the need to preserve the Security Council's role, its interaction with other organs of the United Nations and, in short, its "behaviour".

There have been conflicting assessments of the matter, as we all have heard. Owing to time constraints, I will not elaborate this point today, but I would just like to draw attention to the linkage that Ambassador Sen established, with great eloquence and passion, between the alleged weaknesses and shortcomings of the Security Council as it stands now — in more general terms, its alleged inadequacies — and the need for Security Council reform, which might bring in more permanent members, even without veto power. This would bring about a shift in the balance and in the structure of power. The idea is to balance, so to speak, the excess of power of the P5, or looking at the substance, to "contain" the P5.

Security Council reform, with an expansion in its permanent membership, is to be seen, from the point of view of substance, as part of a strategy of containment of the P5. Of course, this is nothing new. We have heard this argument by Ambassador Sen and other distinguished representatives, advocating shaking the tree and restructuring power within the Security Council. The former Permanent Representative of

Germany, Mr. Pleuger, was very vocal on this topic. We veterans recall this plea for restructuring. I mention Mr. Pleuger because the current Ambassador, Mr. Matussek, is much more subdued on this point.

If it is true that we need new permanent members in order to balance or restructure the power within the Security Council, what puzzles me is that the United States — for example, Ambassador Khalilzad, and, as we have heard, President Bush, speaking in this General Assembly — and other permanent members seem to favour expansion of the number of permanent members. However, the rationale behind the increase is presumably to curtail their power. Either the P5 members that support expansion have not understood the rationale, as has been explained by Ambassador Sen, or they are masochists. Or, perhaps, something is wrong in what Ambassador Sen and other representatives have been saying.

In fact, the situation is exactly the contrary. It may seem a paradox — and we do not have time now to elaborate further on this point — but, if one wants to strengthen the P5 influence within the Security Council, what you have to do is just enlarge it with new permanent members without veto power. To understand my line of thought, let us recall how the Roman Empire expanded and strengthened itself. In facing the challenges from the provinces, the Empire strengthened itself by co-opting them, by integrating them. And you, Mr. President, you come from the region and you understand very well and know the history of the region very well; you understand how the Roman Empire strengthened itself. We can also read Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian* to see it. From the generals, who were co-opted at the top, to the prisoners, who were given Roman citizenship, all the while staying prisoners, all were co-opted.

In fact, today, for the P5 and the Security Council to have new members without the veto is a very clever that strengthens influence. There is a great advantage in having to deal always with the same members. There can be a lot of trade-offs with a member that cannot block you because it has no veto power, but will, at the same time, inevitably tend to behave as a fellow member of the same privileged "boardroom".

Let us not mix permanent membership, which implies veto power and can, indeed, make a difference in the balance of power in the Security Council, with the permanent presence of a member that has a seat without veto power. Ambassador Sen's scenario is as follows: if you want to contain or curtail the powers of the P5 in order to have a "different" Security Council, then you should not settle for anything less than permanent members with veto power. Here, we can also understand the rationale behind the African position as it was presented so passionately this morning by the Permanent Representative of Uganda, Mr. Butagira.

What we will have, if we have an expansion without veto power, is simply a strengthening of the P5 club. Let us be blunt. We will have more members that will benefit from the cascade effect, a point that has been so forcefully highlighted by the Permanent Representative yesterday of Costa Rica, Ambassador Urbina, and before him, Ambassador Ugarte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica.

As an alternative to new permanent members with veto power, if you really want to shift the balance of power within the Security Council, maybe something else is needed, something different from what Ambassador Sen and other distinguished representatives have advocated. I do not like very much the idea of containment, because it goes a bit against my thinking. I prefer not to go against somebody but to build together with somebody. I prefer to say that we really want to make the Security Council more representative of today's geopolitical realities.

Let me now recall, as I have done in the past, in 1945, in Dumberton Oaks in Washington D.C., the idea of "regional seats" was suggested. Among those advocating regional seats — in 1945, more than 60 years ago — were Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Philippines and Uruguay. The Egyptian delegate, Badawi Pasha, was among the most vocal in favour of regional seats. At that time, the big Five flatly rejected the notion of regional seats, because they were potentially very dangerous as a counterbalance to their power.

Today, in the last twenty years, what is the reality that we have in front of us? It is regional organizations, regional ownership and regional empowerment. This is what we have to address and we have to see how to address this within the context of the reform that we have been discussing for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years.

A few days ago, we had a very interesting thematic debate in the Security Council, organized by the Indonesian presidency, on the relationship between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations (see S/PV.5776). It became very clear that the central pillars of our system are now regional. What struck me was the lack of coherence in the debate. On the one hand, we talk about the fundamental importance of regional organizations, such as the African Union and the European Union. As Ambassador Butagira recalled this morning, Africa takes up 78 per cent of our time in the Council. On the other hand, when we talk about Security Council reform, we forget about the importance of regional organizations. Somewhere along the line, we are missing something.

Have we sufficiently explored the notion of permanent regional representation as a basis for negotiations on Security Council reform? I recall a very lively discussion on that subject in a consultation with the five Facilitators; there was a very vigorous intervention by Ambassador Abdelaziz of Egypt. But we cannot say that we have addressed this issue just because we discussed it on a couple of afternoons.

Here, I should like to recall that the representative of Indonesia said yesterday that the regional approach brought with it some interesting ideas that were worthy and needed to be further explored. Moreover, yesterday or the day before, the representative of El Salvador flagged the importance of addressing the issue of the regional approach.

That brings me back to the African vision, but because, as Ambassador Butagira said, we have to listen. I recall that, at a meeting at African Union headquarters at least two years ago, it was made very clear that the African vision — which dates back to 1945, 60 years ago — looks forward. At that time, the African vision was defeated. This time, because we will be responsible for the reform that we carry out, let us not allow that vision to be defeated.

This morning, Mr. Butagira clearly reaffirmed that the African Union is not asking for permanent membership for one nation. So there is a substantial — I repeat, substantial — difference between the aspirations of African countries and those of other member countries. The language being used — permanent membership — is the same, but the concept is substantially different. What Africans are requesting is a permanent seat for the region in order to correct a historical imbalance.

What we must do now is, rather than trying to split the African Union, to see whether it is possible to apply the African concept of regional ownership and empowerment to other areas so that they can benefit from it. If that is possible, we must find ways to do this, as I believe Ambassador Akram of Pakistan hinted. We must address how to "export" the African vision to other areas, taking into account the cultural and political differences and the historical development of States. As the Permanent Representative of Egypt forcefully emphasized during those consultations three or four months ago, there cannot be different models for reform; we cannot carry out reform with different models for Africa and Asia. So we must work for a new San Francisco in that regard.

As I said at the outset, the positions of some of the countries that agree with the principles of the Uniting for Consensus idea have been very clearly stated during the consultations. Once again, we have placed on record our ideas on how to proceed, on the need to carefully prepare for the next phase of negotiations, on the critical importance of including all stakeholders at every stage of the process — as you, Mr. President, so wisely stated at the outset of the consultations — and, finally, on the importance of continuing our work in the Open-ended Working Group, which is the most flexible and inclusive body of the General Assembly.

I should like to comment on the last two of those issues. We cannot carry out reform without including the entire membership, as you said in your introductory statement, Mr. President. In reform of the Security Council, there are no major players or second-class players; we are all primary players. Allow me to be very frank: I would not like to see a repeat of what we saw during the final stages of preparing the World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), when doors were shut in the faces of United Nations Members. That cannot happen a second time.

It has been said by some, including Ambassador Matussek, that the Open-ended Working Group is not the right forum for bringing forward the work that you will lead, Mr. President. To say that the Open-ended Working Group is not effective is to say that the United Nations is not effective, which perhaps is true. But if the Working Group is not effective, it is because we

have not made it effective over the past 15 years. The United Nations will not work, if we do not want it to work or want to have its decisions implemented. So if we have the necessary political will, the Open-ended Working Group will work marvellously well. It is the best tool that we have at our disposal — provided, of course, we have the necessary political will.

At the sixty-first session, the Open-ended Working Group was very successful, thanks to the truly outstanding performance of the Facilitators and the two other colleagues who succeeded them. They submitted two reports, and substantial progress has been made in following up on those reports. So how can we say that the Open-ended Working Group is not effective? There has been substantial progress, and, as we have decided by consensus, we must build on that progress.

Before proceeding further, I should like to point out that we must not be held hostage by the Babel of languages, as Ambassador Sen is always saying. We need to engage in discussion, consultation and negotiation, because perhaps we are talking about exactly the same thing. If we begin with what should be the first point to be addressed in deciding on reform — whether to expand the Council to 19 or 26 members — we should realize that those are two completely different things. So if we decide that there should be 19 members, that decision would have certain consequences, and if we decide that there should be 26 members, that decision would have other consequences. But let us suppose that we conclude that the best solution is, say, 22 members. What has occurred is that we have had discussions, consultations, negotiations — it does not matter what we call them — the point is that every day we are in negotiations — negotiations in the broadest sense of the word. That said, having addressed the question of language, I do not think it has very much importance.

Let us go back to the reports of the facilitators, although I do not want to dwell on their substance, in the interests of time. What is the central point of the intermediary approach? While, again, not going into the substance, I want to draw attention to a point that was forcefully made by Ambassador Wenaweser of Liechtenstein. As far as I can recall, he has been the only one to say — or at least the one who made the point most forcefully when he spoke the day before yesterday — that the intermediary approach — and I would add "or any negotiated solution", although he was talking only about the intermediary approach — has to be sustainable. Otherwise, as soon as an interim solution is adopted, we will start working for a change in that solution through a long electoral campaign.

If we are indeed going to embark on the path of the intermediary approach, it should not be presented, as Ambassador Wenaweser put it, as a "less-than-ideal solution" — and that is a bit of an understatement —

> "that we would set about to change or further refine as soon as it was adopted. Rather, such an intermediary approach should only be considered if it finds the largest possible political support, which has been elusive for all the other proposed solutions presented in the past". (*A/62/PV.47*)

Thus, unless we have it set in our minds that the intermediary approach is the right one, as was forcefully stated by the Permanent Representative of Djibouti, if I remember correctly, it would be better not to embark on that path, since it would be useless to do so if there is some hidden agenda behind it or if we are simply postponing something that we want and that we could have today. I think that, as Ambassador Wenaweser said, if we really believe in the potential of this approach, that is the path the facilitators have indicated, without excluding any other solution.

Many others, in different words, have, in the last two days, emphasized the importance of laying the ground work first. As Ambassador Yousfi of Algeria said, if I remember correctly, in order for negotiations to succeed, we have to properly prepare the ground for them. The same idea was also articulated this morning by, for example, the Permanent Representative of Uganda. But I would say that the most forceful language on this point has been yours, Mr. President, because you have said that our objective should be to develop a framework for beginning intergovernmental negotiations by identifying and reaching agreement on the various negotiable elements. I do not have to add anything else to that statement. That is what is at stake.

I could very well mention many others of the 80 members who have taken the floor, but I shall limit myself to mentioning only two more. The Permanent Representative of Egypt, Ambassador Abdelaziz, stated that "the President of the General Assembly should lead more consultations" — note that he used the word "consultations" —

> "within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group to narrow the difference in

> positions between the conflicting interests of all stakeholders. Such consultations could be undertaken with the aim of reducing the number of alternatives stipulated under every category of the facilitators' reports with a view to creating a positive environment that could lead to the eventual introduction of a vision that could work as a basis for negotiations based on a proposal or proposals from Member States". (*A/62/PV.47*)

Here, too, what is at stake is very clear.

Allow me finally to cite the statement of the Permanent Representative of China, Ambassador Wang Guangya. With Asian wisdom, he stated:

> "Regarding the negotiating process, we must first reach agreement on the entire framework through full consultations among all sides, because an edifice can be built only on a firm foundation". (*A/62/PV.48*)

Mr. President, I would conclude by saying that, under your guidance, we need to set a common ground. And that common ground should not be the lowest common denominator. We have to keep up the momentum. There is no question of maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, just to put the record straight, there appears to be some subliminal message in members' statements that there is a group — the Group of Four or some other like-minded States — that is advocating negotiations. And it is never said, but it sounds as though there is another group that wishes to counter the notion of negotiations; the subliminal message is that this is the Uniting for Consensus group. Now, this situation is completely the opposite of what one would expect. Since the Musharraf-Prodi event of September 2006, the United for Consensus group has been the front-runner — indeed, the record speaks of it — the front-runner in asking for negotiations. Before the Prodi-Musharraf event, nobody was asking for negotiations. The only game in town was to sell a product as the best product available. It was a selling exercise, not a negotiating exercise.

So let us say it frankly: United for Consensus is the front-runner in asking for negotiations. I say that just to set the record straight. As I said before — because it is the central point — we need for all the stakeholders to participate in the negotiation process, because we all have an interest in it. That is why the General Assembly adopted decision 61/561 last September, of which we are all well aware. That is our guide; we do not have to reinvent the wheel. We agreed, in a consensual way, to a very important decision.

At its previous session, the General Assembly entrusted to the present session and its President the task of moving this process forward. We have to move together, and we must not be pushed. I read in the press of some countries that "we will push hard". I think it would be counterproductive to push hard. We have to push, but we must not be pushed. We have to move in an orderly and effective manner. We need your guidance, Mr. President. Above all, we trust you and we are ready to continue to work with you, and with all the States Members of the United Nations.

Mr. Al-Khater (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to begin, Sir, by welcoming your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, and by congratulating you on your assumption of your high post. We assure you of our support in discharging your heavy responsibilities in the course of the session.

I also wish to pay tribute to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa and to offer our gratitude for her prudent leadership of the sixty-first session, for her outstanding contributions towards invigorating the work of the Assembly and for moving forward with the question of Security Council reform, which will enhance the overall reform process of the United Nations.

The delegation of the State of Qatar will focus here on agenda item 112, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Reform is long overdue and the composition of the Security Council cannot remain as it was in 1945. While major decisions are usually confined to the close circle of the five permanent members, all Council members should be closely involved in the decision-making process. There should also be a mechanism to ensure the full participation of other United Nations Member States, in particular, the consultative mechanism should be enhanced through the involvement of countries directly impacted by conflict.

Non-permanent Council members should bear increased responsibility in order to reflect the positions of the larger membership that elected them. An expanded Security Council is essential in order to reflect the international community of today. Those

changes would enhance the mandate of the Council and improve its credibility as a prominent organ of the United Nations system.

Of course, no solution can satisfy all Member States, but we should be ready to achieve consensus on a complete set of proposals. It is also clear that the representation of certain regions, including Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, must be an objective and that the large contributions by those countries should be taken into account.

Now that United Nations reform has become a pressing issue, given the dangers facing the international political order, the Security Council must be fully capable of addressing the crises and threats to world peace at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Council must therefore be equipped with the necessary tools for effective action. The international community as a whole should first and foremost see Council resolutions as binding and legitimate and the composition of the Council should not remain — especially as far as permanent membership is concerned — without change, 60 years after its establishment.

The Council cannot afford to ignore the changing world, which is witnessing new geopolitical realities. Terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are greater threats, as are civil wars. Although those factors should be taken into account, the appearance of developing countries on the international arena should also be recognized. Developing countries have become effective elements that are increasingly playing a significant role in settling conflicts by peaceful means.

Responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council and it is necessary for its legitimacy that its composition reflect the state of the world today. The Security Council should therefore be enlarged and additional permanent members should be added; we also need newly elected non-permanent members to enable the Council to be more representative. In our vision, a reformed Security Council should represent regional dynamics. Its composition should be flexible and better able to respond to global changes and to the new power structures. It should be a Council that does not support privilege or double standards.

Qatar remains convinced that the right of veto should be abolished and, if that is impossible, it should not be expanded for any reason whatsoever. We must not pretend that the United Nations can remain relevant and important and at the same time be a club for the few. It is regrettable — and we must state it explicitly — that the political will that is necessary to move from conceptual discussion regarding reform to actual reform is still lacking.

We are convinced that reform of the Security Council has become more urgent and cannot be postponed further. In point of fact, our countries decided in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) that joint efforts should be intensified to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects, and now we have a good chance to do that at the current session of the General Assembly.

The Millennium Declaration, which is a collective vision of all United Nations Member States for a better and more just world, should be our guiding light; we should not only comply with the Declaration in general terms but should fully implement its objectives.

Last but not least, during its non-permanent membership of the Security Council for 2006-2007, the State of Qatar has gained extensive experience in the work of that organ. It has observed the good aspects of the Council as well as its weak areas, learning more about its importance and its real scope of functions Unless the Security Council adjusts to the new realities in international relations, it will be unable to maintain its credibility and authority across the globe.

We must ensure fair representation of all Member States in the Security Council. The State of Qatar stands ready to participate actively and constructively in intergovernmental negotiations to achieve concrete results during the present session of the General Assembly in order to accomplish the difficult task of making the Security Council more effective and more representative of the new geopolitical realities of our times. Then, no one could question the Council's legitimacy.

In that regard, we stress the need for a united position with respect to all proposals and reform issues within the United Nations. Reform should not focus exclusively on the issue of the expansion of Security Council membership. Qatar rejects that approach and will oppose pushing any weak premature draft resolution to a vote in the General Assembly. In this context we stress the need for consensus.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on the items.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/62/2?

It was so decided.

The President: Allow me first of all, to avail myself of the opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Marty Natalegawa, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly for the period 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November.

During the discussion of agenda item 9, "Report of the Security Council", Member States expressed their appreciation for the role played by Indonesia, the current President of the Security Council. However, some serious concerns were expressed regarding the report itself, in particular the lack of comprehensive evaluation of the various deliberations of the Council.

In order to preserve the balance between the main organs of this Organization and to improve transparency and strengthen cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council, many participants in the debate stressed the importance that the report should in future be more analytical and substantive. That is why we will probably have to pursue a course where we seek simultaneously to revitalize the General Assembly and to reform the Security Council.

I am particularly pleased to be able to state that we have had a very profound and, above all, comprehensive and fruitful discussion on Security Council reform under agenda item 122. It was a frank and effective dialogue, which provided valuable input for further General Assembly deliberations on this very important aspect of the overall United Nations reform agenda. It fully supported the notion that the reform of the United Nations system is one of the priority issues for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

The debate also demonstrated the clear commitment of Member States to embark upon a new stage that offers the prospect of achieving the ultimate goal of comprehensive reform of the Security Council. Delegates, you have paved the way towards the objective of developing a framework to identify and reach agreement on the various negotiable elements that would then allow us to arrive at the point to begin intergovernmental negotiations. In other words, the bridge between the results achieved during the sixty-first session and the way forward during the sixty-second session needs to be constructed. The pillars of the edifice called intergovernmental negotiations must be set up in the manner that this Assembly has defined them during the debate that we are now concluding.

First, we must bear in mind that Security Council reform is an integral part of strengthening the United Nations. It must, therefore, go hand in hand with the transformation of the wider United Nations system.

Secondly, prudent and principle-oriented guidance by the President of the General Assembly is required, although it must be based on a joint venture with Member States in good faith and mutual respect.

Thirdly, the way forward ought to be accomplished through an objective and transparent process starting with identifying the negotiables in order then to move to intergovernmental negotiations.

Fourthly, the Open-ended Working Group should carry out consultations on the framework and modalities for intergovernmental negotiations.

Fifthly, further steps must contain components and notions that will allow the membership to reach general agreement on all aspects of Security Council reform, in particular on the composition of the Council and its working methods.

Sixthly, reform of the Security Council must accommodate the interests and concerns of all sides, especially those who are currently under-represented.

Lastly, Member States should refrain from steps that could serve to undermine the current momentum and consensus and seek to continue a process aimed at achieving result-oriented solutions.

Let me briefly refer to some sparks that have characterized the debate over the last two and a half days. Member States pleaded for clear, common sense, knowing that we all have a shared responsibility to achieve results. One cannot agree more. However, this will require our combined efforts, based on pragmatism, political courage, mutual faith and respect, as well as flexibility and the political will to reach the broadest possible agreement.

There were also requests to speed up the rhythm of the process. At the same time we must avoid the danger of doing things too hastily. The speed at which we proceed should not be conditioned solely by the authority of the leadership, but rather by the political will of Member States.

On the way forward, we should bear in mind that all the achievements so far are the result of our collective actions. We cannot afford therefore, to undermine this collective political momentum by calculatingly imparting it with hesitation in order to derail or disrupt the process.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that I will count very much on your support and cooperation in conducting the process during the coming period. We should all continue to work together in a spirit of constructive cooperation and tackle all the issues and tasks set out by the General Assembly in its decision 61/561, adopted on 17 September 2007, in order to faithfully fulfil its recommendations.

With this in mind, I will shortly communicate to Member States the outline of the follow-up process.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 122.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.52

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

52nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 November 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m.

Agenda item 113

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(a) Election of seven members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/77)

The President: Pursuant to General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987 and upon nomination by the Economic and Social Council, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

The Assembly has before it document A/62/77, which contains the nominations by the Economic and Social Council to fill the vacancies in the Committee that will occur as a result of the expiration, on 31 December 2007, of the terms of office of Algeria, China, Ghana, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya and the Republic of Korea. Those States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, after 1 January 2008, the following States will still be members of the Committee: Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Cuba, France, Haiti, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Pakistan, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe. Therefore, those 25 States are not eligible in this election.

I should now like to inform members that the following States have been nominated by the Economic and Social Council: the three African States for three vacancies are Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Niger; the three Asian States for three vacancies are Bangladesh, China and the Republic of Korea; and the one Latin American and Caribbean State for one vacancy is Jamaica.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on the basis of dispensing with the secret ballot?

It was so decided.

The President: The number of States nominated from among the African States, the Asian States and the Latin American and Caribbean States is equal to the number of seats to be filled in each of those groups.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare those States nominated by the Economic and

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07-60012 (E)

Social Council from among the African States, the Asian States and the Latin American and Caribbean States, namely, Bangladesh, China, Jamaica, Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Niger and the Republic of Korea, elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate the States that have just been elected members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Members will recall that from previous sessions, and as indicated in document A/62/77, there remain two vacancies in the Group of Western European and other States for members whose term of office would begin on the date of election. One term will expire on 31 December 2008 and the other on 31 December 2009. The General Assembly will be in a position to act on those vacancies upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of two Member States from that region.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 113.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(b) Election of twenty-nine members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme

The Acting President: Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 and Assembly decision 43/406 of 24 October 1988, the Assembly will proceed to the election of 29 members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2007.

The 29 outgoing members are the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ghana, Hungary, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Sweden, Turkey, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania. Those States are also eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, after 1 January 2008 the following States will still be members of the Governing Council: Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Germany, Haiti, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, the United States of America and Uruguay. Therefore, those 29 States are not eligible in this election.

As members know, in accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chairmen of the regional groups that for the eight seats from the African States, the eight endorsed candidates are Benin, the Congo, Guinea, Mali, Mauritius, the Niger, Somalia and Tunisia.

For the seven seats from the Asian States, the seven endorsed candidates are Bangladesh, Fiji, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia and Tuvalu.

For the three seats from the Eastern European States, the three endorsed candidates are Belarus, Croatia and Hungary.

For the five seats from the Latin American and Caribbean States, the five endorsed candidates are the Bahamas, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba and Mexico.

For the six seats from the Western European and other States, the six endorsed candidates are Finland, Israel, Italy, Monaco, the Netherlands and Spain.

Since the number of candidates endorsed by the African States, the Asian States, the Eastern European States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to elect those candidates as members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The following 29 States have thus been elected members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008: the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Colombia, the Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Fiji, Finland, Guinea, Hungary, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, the Netherlands, the Niger, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Tunisia and Tuvalu.

I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme.

May I take it that it is the wish if the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 113?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 114

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/107)

The Acting President: As indicated in document A/62/107, since the terms of office of Austria, China, Egypt, Jamaica, Kenya, Nepal and the United States of America will expire on 31 December 2007, it will be necessary for the President of the General Assembly to appoint, during the current session, seven members in order to fill the resulting vacancies. Those members will serve for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2008.

After consultations with the Chairmen of the groups of African States, Asian States and Western European and other States, the President has appointed Austria, China, Japan, Kenya, Tunisia and the United States of America as members of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2008.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of those appointments?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding the remaining vacant seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, the President will continue to hold consultations with that regional group.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 114.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/528)

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 6 of its report that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008: Mr. Jorge Flores Callejas of Honduras; Mr. Imtiaz Hussain of Pakistan; Ms. Misako Kaji of Japan; Mr. Jerry Kramer of Canada; Mr. Peter Maddens of Belgium; Mr. Nagesh Singh of India.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/529)

The Acting President: In paragraph 4 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as

members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008: Mr. Joseph Acakpo-Satchivi of Benin; Mr. Abdelmalek Bouheddou of Algeria; Mr. Gordon Eckersley of Australia; Mr. Bernardo Greiver del Hoyo of Uruguay; Mr. Luis Mariano Hermosillo Sosa of Mexico; and Mr. Eduardo Manuel da Fonseca Fernandes Ramos of Portugal.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

(c) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/530)

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 5 of its report that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Achim Kassow of Germany and the reappointment of Mr. William McDonough of the United States of America and Ms. Hélène Ploix of France as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointments by the Secretary-General of Mr. Achim Kassow of Germany and the reappointment of Mr. William McDonough of the United States of America and Ms. Hélène Ploix of France as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In paragraph 6 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the General Assembly reappoint Mr. Ivan Pictet of Switzerland as an ad hoc member of the Investments Committee for a one-year term beginning on 1 January 2008.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the reappointment of Mr. Ivan Pictet of Switzerland as an ad hoc member of the Investments Committee for a one-year term beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

(d) Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/531)

The Acting President: In paragraph 4 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the Auditor-General of the General Audit Office of China as a member of the Board of Auditors for a six-year term of office beginning on 1 July 2008.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint the Auditor-General of the General Audit Office of China as a member of the Board of Auditors for a six-year term of office beginning on 1 July 2008?

It was so decided.

(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/532)

The Acting President: In paragraph 4 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Agustin Gordillo of Argentina and reappoint Mr. Dayendra Sena Wijewardane of Sri Lanka as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Agustin Gordillo of Argentina and to reappoint Mr. Dayendra Sena Wijewardane of Sri Lanka as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

(f) Appointment of members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/533)

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee recommends, in paragraph 8 of its report, that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a three-year term of office beginning 1 January 2008: Mr. Vadim Dubinkin of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vijayendra Nath Kaul of India and Mr. Adrian Patrick Strachan of Jamaica.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In paragraph 9 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends, in accordance with paragraph 7 of the annex to resolution 61/275 of 29 June 2007, that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008: Mr. John Muwanga of Uganda and Mr. David M. Walker of the United States of America.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons as members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (a) to (f) of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

Programme of work and organization of the session

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that, in order to allow time for further consultations on draft resolution A/62/L.11, the consideration of agenda item 48, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", and agenda item 116, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", scheduled as the first item this morning, will be postponed to Monday, 19 November 2007.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey), Vice-President, in the Chair.

The Acting President: I would now like to consult members regarding an extension for the work of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 21 September 2007, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) would complete its work by Thursday, 15 November 2007.

However, the President has been informed by the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee that the Committee will not be able to complete its work by today, Thursday, 15 November and would need an additional meeting on 20 November 2007, depending on the availability of conference services.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee for one additional meeting?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

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General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

53rd plenary meeting
Monday, 19 November 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Cyclone in Bangladesh

The President: Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, I should like, on behalf of all the members of the General Assembly, to extend our deepest sympathies to the Government and the people of Bangladesh for the tragic loss of life and material damage that have resulted from the recent cyclone.

May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any requests for their help.

Agenda items 48 and 116 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/62/L.11/Rev.1)

The President: I would like to call the Assembly's attention to draft resolution A/62/L.11/Rev.1, in particular that it has also been issued under agenda item 54, "Sustainable development".

Members will recall that, at the second plenary meeting on 21 September 2007, this item was allocated to the Second Committee for its consideration. If there is no objection, the General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/62/L.11/Rev.1 also under agenda item 54.

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.11/Rev.1, entitled "Overview of United Nations activities relating to climate change".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.11/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/62/L.11/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 62/8).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 48 and 116.

Agenda items 71 and 72

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/324 and Corr.1)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/62/72, A/62/83, A/62/87 and A/62/323)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

07-60309 (E)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/310)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/82)

(d) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/467)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.12)

Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/310)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.12

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretariat for the report submitted under agenda item 71(d), entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster".

United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance has been acquiring growing importance in the light of an increasing number of humanitarian threats and challenges. We proceed from the necessity to ensure comprehensive and coordinated responses to humanitarian situations. It is important to preserve the fundamental principles of humanitarian assistance — namely, neutrality, humanity, impartiality, respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States.

Ukraine attaches utmost importance to the role of the United Nations, particularly that of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in the strengthening of international cooperation in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is essential to ensure that the United Nations strategy for Chernobyl is implemented in an effective and timely manner. Ukraine strongly believes that, given the scope and magnitude of the Chernobyl catastrophe and its severe long-term consequences, this issue should remain on the agenda of the General Assembly and be considered in plenary in the future as part of the humanitarian cluster, with a special focus on economic assistance.

In a statement, delivered earlier this year, the President of Ukraine, Victor Yushchenko, stressed that the Chernobyl issue affected the whole country, and he insisted that the polluted zone should be developed, calling it

> "not only the area of tragedy but also the land of vast opportunities ... . This territory must not be forgotten. We want to see this land alive and revived".

The draft resolution before us today (A/62/L.12) is a platform for further action to optimize the international response to the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. This document, based on the Secretary-General's biennial report, takes stock of the progress made so far and seeks to map out further the plans for immediate assistance. It recognizes the importance of strengthening international cooperation on Chernobyl.

It is essential to emphasize that Member States welcome efforts of the international community to complete construction of the shelter facility and related nuclear safety projects at Chernobyl, in accordance with international standards, to transform the site into a stable and environmentally safe state.

We pay special attention to the proposal by the UNDP "to coordinate the drafting of a United Nations action plan for Chernobyl recovery to 2016" in order to implement the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions, the aim of which is to maximize limited resources, avoid duplication of effort and build on recognized agency mandates and competencies.

While cordially thanking all delegations for their support in bringing this draft resolution to consensus, we kindly request that delegations consider sponsoring it as well.

We appreciate the contributions made by all Member States and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as representatives of civil society, the private sector and the donor community, towards the development of cooperation to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

The Government of Ukraine remains fully committed to cooperating with the other two affected States, as well as with all international partners, to mitigate the legacy of the Chernobyl tragedy.

Since the Chernobyl disaster has affected many parts of the world, it is important that we continue to study its consequences in order to enable humankind to never forget the bitter lessons of the past.

Mr. Godinho (Portugal): First of all, I join in the expression of sympathy expressed by you, Mr. President, in respect of the recent tragic calamity in Bangladesh.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted for consideration under this agenda item. The EU would also like to express its solidarity with all those affected by humanitarian emergencies in the last year. We wish to pay tribute to the courageous humanitarian field workers who risk their lives to bring assistance to those in need.

Events this year, the most recent being the humanitarian and security crisis in the Sudan, and in the Darfur region in particular, as well as the crises in Chad and the Central African Republic, have again highlighted the importance of an immediate and coherent response by the humanitarian community as a whole, as well as the need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration with national and local governments.

The principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence remain the cornerstones for the provision of humanitarian assistance, as does the need to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. Through its future consensus on humanitarian aid, which we expect to be endorsed by the end of the year, the EU reaffirms that its humanitarian action should be needs-based and respect these humanitarian principles. We also reiterate our commitment to continued support for the central and overall coordinating role of the United Nations in promoting a coherent international response to humanitarian crises.

The issue of access is central to all humanitarian work. The lack of access and the obstruction of aid, including bureaucratic obstacles, continue to raise concern. We all have a collective responsibility to guarantee that people in need receive assistance. The European Union wishes to strongly urge all Governments and parties to conflict to ensure rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance and protection of affected populations. We also condemn attacks against humanitarian personnel and once again call for the need to hold accountable those responsible for perpetrating illegal acts. Bringing perpetrators to justice is vital, and stronger action must be taken to end impunity.

The European Union calls for an immediate end to violence against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence. Effective measures for prevention, as well as for protection of and support to victims of gender-based violence, must be put in place by Member States. In addition, we strongly encourage the integration of a gender perspective into humanitarian operations.

Regarding refugees and displacement, the EU notes with great concern that the number of refugees around the world has increased this year to almost 10 million. Furthermore, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continues to grow at an alarming rate, totalling almost 24 million worldwide at the moment. We believe that protection of and assistance to IDPs should be comprehensively strengthened. The EU, therefore, welcomes the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as a cluster — lead in this regard and looks forward to further cooperation with the United Nations on this issue.

The EU is committed to the advancement of a humanitarian reform agenda for the promotion of a more predictable and effective humanitarian response. The Union strongly supports the cluster approach and hopes to see further progress in the rollout of clusters, both at the global and field levels, particularly in ongoing emergencies. The cluster system can help bridge gaps in sectoral capacity, avoid duplication and improve response capacity through the pooling of efforts and resources. In this context, and while acknowledging that there is always room for

improvement, we are pleased with the initial feedback from the field and call for a joint effort to inform local, national and regional authorities about the operations and benefits of the cluster approach. We also call on States to respond to the final appeal for building global humanitarian response capacity launched in April of this year.

On a separate point, the humanitarian/resident coordinator system is key to a successfully coordinated humanitarian response at the country level. The European Union welcomes recent initiatives which seek to strengthen the humanitarian/resident coordinator system such as the establishment of a humanitarian coordinator pool, as well as better recruitment and training practices.

Recognizing the benefits of the effective engagement and coordination of relevant humanitarian actors, the European Union continues to support and further encourage the establishment of partnerships with local actors and non-governmental organizations, as well as with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. While fully taking into account the specificity of actors and their diversity, we consider that the interaction and close involvement of NGOs, for example, is very important. In effect, non-governmental and community-based organizations are in many cases the first to respond in crises and play a key role in humanitarian response.

The European Union believes that the roles and responsibilities of actors in the United Nations system working with the transition from relief to development should be strengthened, both in natural disaster situations and complex emergencies. In that context, we believe that the Peacebuilding Commission can make an important contribution to a coordinated response by the United Nations to States emerging from conflict, as we have seen in the cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone. The European Union remains committed to the work of the Commission and looks forward to further work in defining areas of the added-value it can provide.

On funding, the EU welcomes the upgraded Central Emergency Response Fund which has played an important role in enabling quicker and more effective responses to humanitarian emergencies. We are pleased to see that over 75 countries have contributed to the Fund. The European Union, for its part, remains committed to the stipulated target of $500 million by 2008. Regarding the United Nations Consolidated Appeal Process — further efforts must be made in order to provide more inclusive and better coordinated needs assessments.

Indicators of emerging crises and needs assessments should be prepared in cooperation with other humanitarian actors and should be reliable, accurate and timely. The European Union encourages further improved priority setting, including in the consolidated Appeal Process. United Nations humanitarian agencies should also develop common mechanisms for compiling and reporting more robust data on humanitarian needs, on assistance and on the performance of humanitarian organizations in meeting demonstrated needs through the use of standards and indicators. Without accurate data and properly assessed needs, humanitarian actors will be at risk of not being able to provide the most suitable and best equipped response to crises.

In recent years, natural disasters have caused more victims and devastation than man-made crises. Just as an example, this year has seen 13 flash appeals for natural disasters, which is three more than the last annual record. According to some statistics, the number of people threatened by natural disasters increased by three times over the last 30 years, and the number of people affected by natural disasters has doubled every 10 years. In that respect, we take note of the recent launch in Geneva of the Global Humanitarian Forum and the intention, in the initial phase of its work, to focus efforts on the humanitarian impact of climate change.

Events this year, especially in Africa, have once again brought to our attention the potential devastating effects of natural disasters and highlighted the importance of an urgent and coherent response by the humanitarian community as a whole. For these reasons and others, the European Union attaches great importance to developing and sustaining disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response capacity at all levels. Lessons learned have shown us that, in the aftermath of a disaster, more lives are saved when response teams can deploy immediately, particularly at the local and national levels.

To that end, the European Union urges States to implement the priorities set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action, as well as to incorporate disaster reduction efforts into sustainable development

and poverty reduction strategies. Early warning mechanisms must also be improved and expanded as a matter of priority. States must invest more in disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, the impact of heavy flooding in Mozambique in 2007 was significantly less than in 2001 thanks partly to improved community preparedness, the introduction of an early warning system and improved national and international coordination, including through the use of military assets.

Allow me to take special note of the positive references made in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/310) to the progress achieved in Rwanda, taking into account the special needs of orphans, widows and victims of sexual abuse from the Rwandan genocide. We also wish to underline the importance of a well-supported solid transition from relief to development.

Finally, and on the issue of the Chernobyl disaster, the European Union is pleased to note that the Secretary-General's report (A/62/467) makes reference to the many efforts and improvements that have been achieved in the past couple of years. As such, we feel that the issue of Chernobyl and the relevant draft resolution (A/62/L.12) would be more appropriately pursued in the development sphere as opposed to the humanitarian cluster where it is currently placed.

The European Union fully accepts the need to make the international humanitarian response system more predictable and effective. We also encourage further efforts to adhere to the principles and best practices of good humanitarian donorship. The European Union will continue to play its part, not only in responding to emergencies as they occur but also in strengthening the international community's capacity to respond.

In that regard, we would like to thank the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts. The past year has posed many challenges to the humanitarian community. We have a duty to continue our collective efforts to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response, always to the benefit of the people in need.

Mr. Tsalko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the Republic of Belarus, I have the honour of thanking the Secretary-General and the United Nations for the report prepared for our consideration, entitled "Optimizing the international effort to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster" (A/62/467). The information in the report fully reflects the activities of the international community on Chernobyl problems, as well as the coordinating role of the United Nations Development Programme.

The report enables us to evaluate the various elements of the actions taken and the activities undertaken through international cooperation on Chernobyl and the great number of events that have taken place in that sphere over the past two years. Most importantly, the report describes the development by Belarus of a new stage of cooperation on Chernobyl. The basic elements of that stage include not emergency humanitarian assistance but rather comprehensive rehabilitation of the polluted territory, including restoring socio-economic activity and meeting the need to establish safe living conditions for individuals and to develop of the regions affected.

The information in the report on the joint programmes carried out by the Republic of Belarus, agencies of the United Nations system, other international organizations and foreign countries very convincingly illustrates the timeliness and effectiveness of the transition to development.

Belarus welcomes the beginning of the implementation of the initiative to assess environmental and security problems in Eastern Europe, which includes an international cooperation project to study the environmental effects of radiation from the accident by taking advantage of the potentials of the Polesie State Radiology Preserve and to revive the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network.

The Republic of Belarus is very grateful for the holding, on 28 April 2006, of a special General Assembly meeting devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. That was a further illustration of the international community's resolve to mitigate the consequences of the catastrophe.

Belarus notes with satisfaction that there has been steady improvement in living conditions in the region affected by the catastrophe. Nevertheless, 20 per cent of the area contaminated by radioactivity is home to more than 1.3 million persons — among whom the incidence of illness is rising, especially thyroid

problems. The Chernobyl catastrophe has had an effect on all human activity, including in the areas of production, culture, science and the economy. Agriculture has been especially affected, with 2,640 square kilometers of cropland removed from production. There were 123 sites producing minerals and other raw materials in the contaminated area. More than 2 million cubic metres of timber production has been lost. The demographic situation in the Chernobyl region has been severely damaged. These and other problems add a heavy burden to our economy.

The environmental and economic rehabilitation of the most affected areas constitutes our Government's main concern. More than 1 million hectares of agricultural land require constant attention in order to ensure clean foodstuffs that meet norms. We are also working to improve specialized medical assistance for those affected by the disaster. Another priority in our socio-economic policy is gas supply. We must also work to supply the affected population with adequate drinking water and to restore contaminated settled areas, where we have to build schools, hospitals and preschools. We also have to improve the legislative basis for minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, so as to ensure targeted financial support by the Government and the establishment of favourable economic conditions for the development of the affected areas.

A planned and systematic approach must be developed to address those problems. We have therefore developed a national programme to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster to cover the period 2006-2010. In that regard, the national budget will include a line item of $1.6 billion. The national Government is now spending about $1 million daily to that effort.

The Republic of Belarus takes note of the fact that the provisions of draft resolution A/62/L.12 to strengthen international cooperation and the coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the effects of the Chernobyl disaster reflect the consistent, systematic and constructive approach of the international community to activities aimed at overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. We welcome the appeal by the General Assembly to the Secretary-General and the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl for continued efforts to enhance the coordination of international efforts in this area.

Our country is especially pleased about the positive reaction and support of the international community for the proposal of Belarus to designate the third decade after Chernobyl as the decade of recovery and sustainable development of the affected regions and we welcome UNDP's initiative to coordinate work on drafting a plan for the decade. That initiative was proposed by Belarus to ensure planned cooperation on the problem of Chernobyl among the Governments of the three most affected countries, scientific groups, international organizations and foreign countries. Joint preparation and implementation of the plan for the decade will enable us to avoid duplication of effort and expenditure that is inevitable when so many participants are working to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

In addition to the decade initiative, the meeting held on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster also featured an appeal by the General Assembly for Belarus to join the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. Unfortunately, this matter has not been decided yet. Given the amount of experience and scientific information that Belarus has accumulated on the issue of atomic radiation as a result of Chernobyl, we believe that the participation of our experts in the Scientific Committee would be of great use to the entire international community.

The Republic of Belarus would like to take this opportunity today to thank all its international partners for their support for our country's activities in overcoming the effects of the Chernobyl disaster. We express the hope that our joint efforts will serve to minimize the negative consequences of the disaster on the lives and health of those in the most affected areas. It is also very important to prevent the possibility of similar accidents in the future and to ensure the environmental safety of the planet as a whole.

Mr. Sallam (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the pleasure of thanking the President and the other members of the Bureau for guiding our work. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for the reports he has provided on the item under discussion on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency assistance of the United Nations.

Human and property losses caused by natural disasters and conflicts in recent years, in a number of developing and developed countries alike, and the

international response and solidarity that followed to help affected States has led us to believe, without a shadow of a doubt, in the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in order to cope with such catastrophes, mitigate their destructive effects and assist victims to return to normal lives as soon as possible. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia therefore reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in coordinating and strengthening emergency humanitarian and relief assistance in the long term. Saudi Arabia appreciates the efforts of the Organization and all those who work in the area of humanitarian assistance.

We would like to emphasize the need to implement the recommendations emanating from international conferences dealing with this issue. That should be done through a comprehensive approach that addresses all stages — beginning with early warning and including the provision of assistance, reconstruction and development. It should also include measures to help poorer States to strengthen their national capacities and cope with natural disasters and the repercussions of war.

Based on its concern to discharge its humanitarian responsibilities vis-à-vis victims of catastrophes and epidemics, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always contributed to United Nations funds and programmes entrusted with this mandate. Saudi Arabia has also made additional contributions as needs arose. Direct contributions have been given to the victims of disasters in coordination with many specialized international organizations. The Saudi Red Crescent Society had distributed in timely fashion over the past three years $361 million for assistance in providing humanitarian services. The Society has acquired distinct experience in this area, and we are very proud of it.

The humanitarian aid provided by Saudi Arabia has not only been limited to bilateral and direct channels and means but has been extended to regional and international efforts through competent funds and international development institutions. This aid has totalled about $24 billion. Saudi Arabia has also contributed to international efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including economic and financial assistance, through various Saudi Arabian funds and regional and international organizations in the context of bilateral agreements with developing countries. All of this is out of our firm conviction that this kind of emergency and development assistance, which is beneficial to all humanity, is indispensable to peaceful coexistence and constructive cooperation and solidarity. Saudi Arabia has therefore provided favourable development assistance in cash and kind, through bilateral channels, totalling over $83.7 billion, which is about four per cent of our gross national product. This is the highest percentage of aid in the entire world.

Eighty-seven developing countries from all continents have benefited from our assistance. This aid has strengthened long-term economic and social development, helped rebuild infrastructure and provided support for education, health, water, agriculture, well-drilling, dam-building and other key sectors. In terms of debt alleviation, Saudi Arabia has cancelled more than $6 billion worth of debt for the poorest developing countries.

Addressing with a serious and realistic attitude the sense of frustration and despair of citizens of the poorer countries because of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and indebtedness, requires us to deepen the principles of humanitarianism, equality, justice and sustainable development in their health, educational, economic and social dimensions. This is all to strengthen international peace, stability and security. This calls for a genuine partnership and mutual development pact between the North and the South.

In addition to their dire need for official development assistance, the indebtedness of the poorest and medium-income countries should also be addressed. Foreign direct investment and the transfer of technology to developing countries must be carried out in a serious fashion in order to liberate international trade and ensure international economic growth.

To guarantee the provision of oil, Saudi Arabia has increased its production capacity which, as everyone knows, is a very expensive endeavour. Saudi Arabia has also hosted a forum on energy in Riyadh — a context for negotiation and cooperation between producers and consumers in order to stabilize oil markets, since oil is an important strategic product that is crucial to international economic stability. Saudi Arabia, in this context, is participating, as a signatory of international instruments to protect the environment, in every international effort to protect the environment, positively, within the principles of common international action, including the Kyoto Protocol.

Saudi Arabia is working to ensure that the world takes the required measures to protect the environment, on the one hand, while protecting global economic growth on the other. We believe that the continuing to development of technology and energy is the key to coping with environmental problems, in particular climate change. The international community must take the necessary measures to confront this problem, in keeping with common, but differentiated responsibility, between developed and developing countries, as set out in the Convention on Climate Change.

Ms. Smith (Australia): The international community is faced today with a formidable level of disasters and emergencies, both in scale and number. These humanitarian emergencies wreak havoc on nations and communities, threatening economic growth and undermining development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is our duty to seek to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises. It is also our responsibility to ensure accountability for the impact of our assistance. At the same time we are facing new challenges, such as climate change, that continue to add complexity to the planning and delivery of humanitarian action.

Australia strongly supports the key role of the United Nations in providing leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action, especially the role of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We welcome the Secretary-General's reports on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and on the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), both of which are informing our discussions and negotiations at this General Assembly.

We have, on a number of occasions, commented positively on the humanitarian reform agenda and the steps the humanitarian system, under OCHA's leadership, have taken to improve the coordination, capacity, funding and partnerships that underpin effective humanitarian action. But we consider it is no longer correct to point to the cluster approach, strengthening of humanitarian coordinators, and mechanisms such as CERF as new approaches or reforms. These are all now integral and fundamental to humanitarian action and how the humanitarian community operates. Lessons are still to be learned and efforts to improve humanitarian response even further must continue. To that end, we look forward to the independent review of CERF and external review of the cluster approach.

All of us who are engaged in humanitarian action must strive to ensure that what we do is as effective as possible and is based on needs. This requires resources, people with the right skills in the right places at the right time, strong and effective coordination of effort, appropriate tools, proper accountability and risk management, and strong and clear leadership. Supporting this must be the objective of the General Assembly as well as the Economic and Social Council.

The best response system in the world is useless if affected communities cannot be reached. Fundamental to saving lives in any emergency is rapid, safe and unhindered access by humanitarian personnel and to goods and services to people in need. Without access, lives cannot be saved. This is simply irrefutable. The safety of humanitarian personnel in emergency response is also critical. Too many humanitarian workers' lives are lost in the line of duty each year. We pay tribute to those who have died while seeking to protect the lives of others. We urge more practical measures, such as encouraging recipient States to work closely with organizations delivering humanitarian aid, to facilitate access and to protect humanitarian personnel.

Another critical humanitarian issue that requires our urgent attention is the protection of civilians. Australia calls on all Member States and other actors, especially in armed conflicts, to prevent violence committed against civilian populations and to effectively respond if and when such acts occur. Australia is particularly concerned that gender-based violence, especially sexual violence, continues to occur at alarming levels in emergency situations. Such violence must be prevented and stopped wherever it occurs or has the potential to occur. Perpetrators of such violence must be apprehended and brought to account, and the survivors must be given the care and support that they need and deserve.

Our doctors tell us that prevention is always better and easier than cure. This fact is as true in the humanitarian field as it is in health care. Australia considers disaster risk reduction, which includes prevention, mitigation and preparedness for natural disasters, as an important priority for humanitarian and development assistance. In this regard, we commend the Hyogo Framework for Action and its programme of

work. Implementation of the Hyogo Framework helps build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters and advocates for the integration of disaster risk reduction into legislation and development planning. Building on Hyogo, we welcome the inaugural meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in June of this year. This forum provided support for the dissemination of disaster risk reduction best practices and the promotion of partnerships among States, non-governmental organizations and the private sector for developing and supporting strategies to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. We encourage further work in this critical area.

Australia is a strong supporter of humanitarian action and the role of the United Nations therein. We are active in supporting prevention, risk reduction and emergency response, and will continue to work to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. As I said previously, the humanitarian challenges facing the international community are formidable. This reality makes our efforts to strengthen our ability to respond all the more critical. We look forward to working with the United Nations, especially OCHA, and all Member States, as we continue to do so.

Mr. Al-Ajran (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we are discussing an important item on the agenda of the General Assembly, namely, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance".

During the last year, the United Nations, through its various specialized agencies, programmes and offices, has played an outstanding role in facilitating the transport and delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance. We share the deep concern expressed by the Secretary-General's report (A/62/87) regarding the increase in the number and intensity of natural disasters compared with previous years, where the damages caused by these disasters have led to a direct effect on the lives of 143 million people and economic losses surpassing $34 billion. We pay our condolences to the Government and the people of Bangladesh over the latest disaster, the hurricane that struck Bangladesh, caused thousands of deaths and resulted in millions of refugees.

My country wishes to convey its gratitude and appreciation to all those providing humanitarian assistance for all their sacrifices. It also expresses deep concern over their targeting and threats aimed at them in zones of natural disasters and conflict. We call upon all countries that host humanitarian workers to exert all necessary efforts to ensure the safety of these international staff, and also commend the proposal of the Secretary-General to set forth preventive plans, exchange information and conduct risk assessments, since such an approach will guarantee the safety of the United Nations staff in the field.

The State of Kuwait is at the forefront of nations providing relief assistance to those ravaged by natural disasters. This assistance is presented in a direct bilateral manner with the States or the regions devastated, out of its firm belief in the necessity of a quick response. During the last three years, Kuwait provided financial assistance as follows: $250,000 to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to assist it in confronting the effects of the flooding of September 2007; $500,000 to assist those affected by the typhoon Yamin, which hit the Sindh and Balochistan regions of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in July 2007; $2 million to assist Somalia in combating the effects of the flooding of July 2007; $500 million to assist in the relief of those affected by hurricane Katrina in the United States; $100 million to those affected by the earthquake in South Asia; $100 million to the States affected by the Asian tsunami disaster; and $300,000 to some Caribbean States affected by hurricane Wilma in November 2005.

The aid that Kuwait provides is full and complete; no amount is discounted for transport, handling and management. In this regard, I also wish to mention that my country has also contributed the amount of $200,000 to the Central Emergency Relief Fund. Since its establishment, the Fund has responded promptly to urgent appeals in emergency situations and, while we commend its performance, we call upon all States Member of the United Nations to increase their contributions to the Fund in order to achieve the desired declared goal of $500 million by 2008.

We affirm the importance of international cooperation in implementing the commitments made to the suffering Palestinian people; that is our responsibility. Here, I would like to pay tribute to the rapid intervention operations by the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the temporary international mechanism, which have spent some $800 million on food, budgetary and monetary support in

emergencies. I would also like to highlight the fact that my country continues to extend assistance to the Palestinians, both directly through the Palestinian Authority or through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Our shared international cooperation cannot solve the problems of the Palestinian people, and the assistance is not the ultimate desire of the Palestinians, as long as Israel continues its inhumane practices against the Palestinian people in undermining all efforts made in that respect and refuses to transfer the Palestinian taxation levies it has collected, except for one transfer that took place in 2007. These practices have added to the worsening of the situation of the Palestinians.

We affirm the importance of cooperating with the Secretary-General's proposal to devise plans of disaster readiness at all levels, update existing plans, and enhance regular training for disasters of the magnitude of Category 5 hurricane Hugo, which struck in 2005. In this regard, we call upon Member States to strengthen their roles and make early warning systems among the priorities of their national, regional and international plans for disaster management.

Finally, I wish to indicate that the State of Kuwait will continue to provide bilateral assistance through the United Nations specialized agencies in order to confront disasters and help rebuild through the efforts of some national development institutes, such as the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and other Kuwaiti charitable organizations and associations. We look forward to a world where everyone lives in security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): First, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports provided for this important session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Government of Iceland, I would like to offer our sincerest condolences to the countries that have experienced humanitarian emergencies. At this very moment, our thoughts are with the people of Bangladesh. I express our deepest sympathy to and solidarity with the families of the victims and all those affected.

The international community learned important lessons in the aftermath of the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004. But we also learned that reform of the humanitarian response was urgently needed. We learned that available funds, impact evaluation, needs assessment and effective coordination of actions of the many important actors in humanitarian assistance are crucial elements for achieving the best results.

We welcome the improvements that have already been made in humanitarian response, in which the United Nations has a leadership role. We also emphasize the need to continue on that path.

We thank the Secretary-General and the Joint Inspection Unit for the recommendations made for reform, which provides a good basis for our work. I wish to underline that gender mainstreaming should be considered as a cross-cutting issue from the earliest stages of any reform.

Governments have an important role to play in ensuring availability of funds. We all know that extensive delays in getting humanitarian assistance to those in need can prove to be disastrous. For that reason, predictable, fast and sound funding in the wake of humanitarian disasters is of the essence.

The establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund has been very successful. It can provide a reliable source of financing that helps agencies on the ground to deal with problems quickly. It is likely that the need for funds will increase, and Governments have to intensify their efforts. We look forward to the pledging conference to be held in December.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant part in humanitarian and development work. The Government of Iceland has, therefore, decided to double its contributions in 2008 allocated to humanitarian and relief operations through Icelandic NGOs and the Red Cross. The private sector is also an important player in building up economic growth. We plan to explore further innovative ways of working with the private sector in developing countries. The Government seeks to harness the energies and efficiencies of NGOs and the private sector, strengthen the pioneering work that they are doing and raise public awareness of the situation in the poorest parts of the world.

I would like to turn briefly to the issue of assistance to the Palestinian people. I thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/82) on the issue, which provides a good overview of the situation and underlines the need for continued, and indeed increased, assistance. The report highlights the role of

women. We all know that there are strong links between women's empowerment and poverty reduction in general, as has been said so often. In cases of humanitarian crisis, women and children are not only the principal victims; women and girls are also particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse. We therefore welcome the intensified emphasis in the report on protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups in crises.

In our debates within this institution we should be careful not to lose sight of the purpose of our work. What are the reasons behind the effort? As the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council responsible for the humanitarian affairs segment this year in Geneva, I have been fortunate to have an opportunity to work closely with very efficient experts on the issue, both representatives from Member States as well as from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian actors. I was impressed to learn how they focus more on the why and less on the how — for example, which version of a text to use. They realize that we are here to help people in need and that we are here to save lives and help people to survive disasters, and that the means should not become the end. If we all continue to do our work in this positive spirit, we will make a difference.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Secretariat for the documents it has prepared for our discussions.

My delegation would like to reiterate here its support for a clear division of labour between the debates of the General Assembly and those of the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council.

Preserving the ambit for humanitarian action is a prerequisite for humanitarian assistance. However, today we are seeing a shrinking of that space. Local and international staff of neutral and impartial humanitarian organizations have paid a heavy toll in human life this year. Similarly, speedy, comprehensive and unimpeded access to people affected by disaster or conflict remains inadequate and unsatisfactory in many respects.

A humanitarian environment is not a given and has to be negotiated and secured through a joint effort on the part of all stakeholders involved, especially in complex emergency situations. International law — and above all the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols — as well as the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and its Optional Protocol, include essential norms regulating the arena for humanitarian action. Unfortunately, those obligations are too often ignored.

Switzerland encourages the Emergency Relief Coordinator to support efforts to preserve the space for humanitarian action by actively facilitating access to affected areas for operational organizations. We strongly urge all States and parties to armed conflicts to honour their obligations, authorize speedy and unimpeded passage of all relief consignments, equipment and personnel, protect civilian populations and ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. We also underscore the unique nature of United Nations humanitarian assistance, which should continue to be independent, neutral and impartial.

The reform of the United Nations humanitarian system, which began two years ago, has produced some encouraging results. However, efforts to sustainably bolster the capacity and effectiveness of the United Nations system on the ground in all types of emergency and under whatever administrative structure — whether that of a resident or humanitarian coordinator or, in the case of integrated missions, a special representative of the Secretary-General — must be redoubled. We also want this process put in a wider context. The strengthening of the coordination of United Nations emergency aid is a subject that precedes this reform, and that will remain at the centre of our concerns in the future.

The international humanitarian system is comprised of several components that are both independent of and complementary to United Nations agencies — such as local and international non-governmental organizations and the members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In that regard, we are pleased that the organizers of the thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which will be held in Geneva from 26 to 30 November, have chosen "Together for humanity" as the theme for that important meeting.

Although the reforms of the United Nations humanitarian system initiated two years ago provide clear guidance for improving operational aspects of humanitarian coordination, there is much less clarity as regards the normative evolution of humanitarian policies and principles since the adoption of resolution

46/182. An analytical evaluation of the normative framework for humanitarian coordination may help us to identify priority areas to focus on, including as regards future resolutions of the General Assembly. Such prioritization will make it possible to improve the relevance and impact of resolutions addressing humanitarian issues.

In a world of ever-changing vulnerabilities and risks, the strengthening of national disaster-preparedness capacities deserves particular attention. In keeping with the commitments set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, all participants in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction — including Governments, regional organizations, the Secretariat and the agencies of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector — must act swiftly and together to help to attain the objective of reducing for the long term the losses caused by disasters.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the Secretary-General in particular for the report submitted in document A/62/87, which will be very useful in our discussions.

At the outset, I wish to indicate that Peru firmly supports United Nations efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Such efforts should be based on, inter alia, the following pillars: observance of the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality in providing humanitarian assistance; adherence to international law in the work of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel; and protection when any act or failure to act hinders or prevents the performance of their humanitarian functions.

In that connection, I should like to highlight a number of strategic guidelines that my delegation considers fundamental. First, we must take a comprehensive and systematic approach. Secondly, we must promote a culture of timely and unrestricted early warning. Thirdly, we must improve rapid-response capacities, recognizing the key advantages of local actors, who are closest to disasters. Fourthly, we need preventive measures, including public education activities, as well as preparation, mitigation and recovery efforts and programmes aimed at, inter alia, rehabilitation, reconstruction, restoring authority and the rule of law, developing sustainable ways to make a living and establishing conditions that promote development. Fifthly, we must promote North-South and South-South cooperation, participation by experts and the transfer of practical technology and knowledge. Sixthly, we must define the respective roles of States, the Organization and its relevant organs, other international organizations — including the international financial institutions — regional organizations, local Governments, communities, the military, experts, non-governmental organizations, the business community and the media, among other civil society actors. We must also improve their capacities.

We agree with the report's diagnosis of the current world situation. Indeed, the increasingly devastating effects of disasters are due to a real increase in the number of natural events and to the increased exposure and vulnerability of populations to the destructive effects of disasters. Climate change, swift and unplanned urbanization and greater population density, inter alia, are contributing to that trend. In that connection, if we are to break the new vicious circle of constant human and material losses, environmental and social degradation and increasing vulnerability, we believe it essential, as indicated in the report, that the international community work towards a disaster management approach that addresses the interconnectedness of threats and vulnerabilities.

In part III of the report, on enhancing the effectiveness of needs-based humanitarian assistance, it is indicated in section D, on broadening humanitarian partnerships, that private companies have continued to emerge as important relief partners. Our country, Peru, can attest to that. As a result of the earthquake that occurred on 15 August of this year, we witnessed the broad and generous mobilization of the entire population, but particularly of private companies, which played a key role in providing materials, food and assistance in the first moments of the emergency. In that regard, we agree with the report, which points out that as the private sector becomes an increasingly important partner, efforts must be made to adapt the United Nations regulatory environment to facilitate public-private partnerships.

Finally, we wish to express our agreement with each of the points set out in the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's report, particularly regarding the need to organize regional responses to disasters. Accordingly, we should like to highlight the project Support for Disaster Prevention in the Andean

Community, which is the outcome of a financial agreement signed in 2003 by the European Union and the General Secretariat of the Andean Community. Its overall objective is to help reduce the vulnerability of persons and property exposed to the dangers and risks of natural disasters and to promote sustainable development in the countries of the Andean Community. It is included in the regional disaster prevention and management policies reflected in the Andean disaster prevention and management strategy and the corresponding strategic plan for 2005-2010.

In conclusion, I wish to express once again the gratitude of the Government of Peru to the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme in Lima and, through him, to all relevant agencies of the United Nations system for the invaluable assistance provided in so many ways when the earthquake struck the southern part of my country on 15 August.

Mrs. Thakur (India): I come from the land of Gautam Buddha, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, all of whom stood for the essential oneness of all human beings, which is the ethical basis for the United Nations and its humanitarian assistance. I am therefore pleased to participate in this debate today.

We thank the Secretary-General for the reports that have been prepared for the discussions on this agenda item. We note the factual nature of the reports, which identify some areas for improvement. We request the Secretary-General to enhance the analytical content of future reports.

All countries are vulnerable to disasters. Nations can, and indeed must, cooperate to find collective and cooperative solutions to the challenges that disasters represent. It is therefore heartening that, in recent years, Member States have come together to promote a more responsive, prompt, fair and needs-based humanitarian assistance system.

India welcomes the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as a non-political collaborative instrument that supports developing countries in times of need. India demonstrated its support for CERF by pledging a contribution of $2 million to the Fund at its launch in New York last year; those funds have already been disbursed. Our contribution was a sign of solidarity with international efforts aimed at addressing the needs of developing countries for emergency humanitarian assistance. It reflected our conviction that, through this reform measure, the United Nations would be better able to assist developing countries in the aftermath of a disaster by making resources available in a timely and predictable manner, and by allocating them evenly across emergencies. It is through the Fund's performance and even-handed approach to requests for assistance that it will continue to attract the support of Member States and donors. It is therefore extremely important that CERF retain a high degree of performance and credibility.

The report of the Secretary-General on CERF (A/62/72) states that the Fund has promoted early action and response to reduce loss of life, and that progress has been made towards achieving its objectives. The report provides details of the expenditures from CERF. It would also be useful to know, in tabular form, the details of all requests received for funding, the proportion of funding provided in each case and the criteria used for the allocations. We look forward to such detailed and analytical information in the forthcoming independent review that will examine the functioning of CERF over its first two years.

In handling disasters, it is important to have coherent national strategies and national capabilities to handle both disaster prevention and disaster management. The development of necessary national capabilities must be the starting point of a disaster management strategy. India has a forward-looking approach to disaster management and mitigation. We have constituted a National Disaster Management Authority, chaired by the Prime Minister and state-level disaster management authorities. The Authority has come forward with a new approach to disaster management that is based on moving away from a relief-centric, post-event approach in favour of a holistic, integrated preventive approach. The focus will be on disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation. Improved coordination among various agencies of the Government is a first step in the new approach. Greater awareness within civil society about prevention, mitigation and preparedness is the next important step, bearing in mind that lack of information and uncoordinated responses hamper relief efforts.

While there is no substitute for effective national efforts, a national response alone can sometimes be inadequate. There is a need for more bilateral, regional and international cooperation to deal with disasters and to make effective use of our capabilities. Greater

cooperation in relief and rehabilitation, in disaster preparedness and in setting up and maintaining early warning systems should be a part of the overall effort to deal with disasters. Through CERF, we have established a more reliable mechanism for saving lives after a disaster and addressing the needs of underfunded emergencies. However, greater efforts are required for disaster prevention, risk reduction and early warning so as to reduce the number of lives lost to disasters.

Disaster risk reduction should be based on proactive and pre-emptive action. Small investments in improving the safety of houses, for example, can reduce the risk of damage to life and property arising from earthquakes. Valuable lives and property can be saved through the use of appropriate housing technologies in earthquake-prone areas. India is developing affordable technologies of this kind. The international community should address the need for information-sharing in such technologies that would help prevent disasters. This approach would be a useful way of addressing the challenge of risk reduction.

Another intervention relates to low-cost insurance against risk. The penetration of insurance in most developing countries is still very limited. There is a need for a proactive approach in insuring the risk-prone regions through an approach that can spread the costs and ensure the financial sustainability of risk insurance mechanisms.

There is also a far greater need for focus on recovery and development after a disaster. A strong recovery effort that builds back better and pays due attention to disaster prevention builds resilience to future disasters. India contributes to the efforts of the Group of 77 to highlight this issue by coordinating an annual draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development. We hope that greater attention will be paid to post-disaster recovery, which strains the capacities of most developing countries in the post-relief period.

We take note of the report's assessment regarding improving the delivery of United Nations humanitarian assistance, including through the improvement of United Nations coordination activities at the field level. The report highlights the cluster leadership approach as an effort in this direction. We believe that there is a need for an evaluation of this approach to assess its impact on improving delivery of humanitarian assistance, particularly its timeliness, the additional expenditure that it entails and the perspective of the receiving countries where this approach has been implemented so far. This approach should be implemented at the country level with the consent and under the leadership of the national Government of the affected State.

India believes that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as contained in the guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance contained in the annex to resolution 46/182. We recall that the guiding principles require that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States be fully respected and that humanitarian assistance be provided with the consent of the affected country and, in principle, on the basis of an appeal by the affected country.

All humanitarian personnel, including those under the auspices of the United Nations, must observe the national laws of the countries where they are and must remain sensitive to the customs and traditions of the host State. They must function in a transparent manner and carry out their assistance-related activities through close consultation and coordination with the affected Government. That is essential for the credibility of international humanitarian assistance.

In accordance with Indian culture and philosophy, we respect all nations and religions. We believe that the world is one family. So, before I conclude, please allow me to wish everyone — all of my family members sitting here — the very best for the coming festival season from me and from my country, India.

Mr. Savostianov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia attaches great importance to the development of the humanitarian discourse in the United Nations. We call for its further strengthening and enhancement, and for the preservation of the non-politicized nature of the endeavour. We support efforts aimed at establishing an optimal division of labour and effective working relationships among the intergovernmental United Nations bodies involved in this process.

We believe that the General Assembly should focus on defining the parameters of the strategic coordination of United Nations humanitarian activities, the Economic and Social Council on developing the

practical aspects of General Assembly decisions and the Secretariat on implementing the requests of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator should continue to react promptly to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council requests, paying particular attention to providing these bodies with objective information on the humanitarian situation around the world.

In this connection, we take note that, in his recent report on strengthening of the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance (A/62/87), the Secretary-General rightly emphasized the importance of intensified international cooperation in the field of national preparedness for natural disasters, with a view to improving response and recovery capacities in the context of achieving the agreed goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the field of disaster risk reduction.

There is today a growing demand for disaster preparedness and early warning mechanisms. We therefore support measures aimed at strengthening contingency planning and preparing for disasters. We believe it necessary to strengthen national early warning, damage assessment and mitigation systems, and to develop international cooperation to build up national capacities in these areas. We support international efforts to promote a global early warning system for natural hazards of all types.

In our view, a promising area for cooperation is in the formulation of measures for adaptation to climate change. We are carefully studying proposals in this area, and we reaffirm our readiness to participate actively in the formulation of agreed approaches in this field.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is making great efforts to improve humanitarian response to natural disasters, technological catastrophes and complex humanitarian emergencies. On the whole, we welcome its work. Not everything here, however, is clear and transparent. For example, in the case of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in close cooperation with the United Nations and in partnership with the United Nations, including in the area of security, and at the same time claiming to be independent, it is not clear to whom they are responsible and accountable. Independence should not mean lack of accountability.

We believe that the United Nations-NGO partnership agreements can and should provide for mechanisms of NGO accountability to the United Nations. This is fully consistent with the task of ensuring coherence and coordination in the work of all organizations involved in humanitarian assistance with the leading role played by the United Nations. In the absence of accountability, it is difficult to ensure responsibility; that could lead to a situation in which a humanitarian mandate authorized by a recipient Government, on the basis of which a given NGO operates in the country, becomes a formal cover-up for activities inconsistent with that mandate. Moreover, this would undermine the concept of humanitarianism as the willingness of the strong to help the weak.

We look forward to the Secretariat's assessment of the implementation of the so-called cluster approach in pilot countries, with an emphasis on the United Nations family's interaction with non-governmental humanitarian organizations in the field.

The establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund has proven to be among the most significant results of our common efforts to improve the humanitarian response machinery. We welcome the Fund's activities during the first 18 months of its existence in its improved format. We anticipate that the independent review of the Fund's activities will be issued next year. In that review, particular attention should be paid to the criteria for allocation of the Fund's resources. I would also like to underline that it would be useful for the review to reflect the principles of interaction between the Fund and other United Nations financial mechanisms, in particular the Peacebuilding Fund, through which money is being channelled to the recipient countries. From our point of view, it is essential to avoid duplication of efforts and to maintain transparency in the criteria for the allocation of funds.

The importance of the compromise reflected in the fundamental resolution 46/182 cannot be overestimated. The guiding principles for the provision of United Nations humanitarian assistance that are enshrined in it are essential for any activities in this field, so as to maintain their credibility for all countries.

Today, the representative of Ukraine introduced for action by the General Assembly a draft resolution (A/62/L.12) on the strengthening of international

cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. More than 20 years after the tragedy this problem remains relevant, as its consequences continue to seriously affect the health of people and the environment, and to hamper the sustained socio-economic development of the affected territories of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

The Russian Government's policy on Chernobyl is focused on continuous assessment of the radiation impact on current programmes for comprehensive rehabilitation of these territories, to which Russia has allocated more than $10 billion over the years. The adoption of the draft resolution by consensus will demonstrate the international community's solidarity with the work of the affected countries and its willingness to continue devoting the necessary international attention to the Chernobyl problem.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Traditionally, we acknowledge the special catalytic and coordinating role of the United Nations on this issue, in particular that of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We are grateful to the UNDP leadership for the high level of cooperation that has been achieved in the implementation of our common objectives, with a view to improving the lives of people in the affected territories.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): It is my privilege to participate in this important joint debate on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. We thank the Secretary-General for his various reports under this agenda item.

Given the multidimensional aspects, I would like to focus on issues of disaster preparedness and risk reduction in the context of challenges posed by natural disasters.

It is said that those who prepare in advance suffer less in emergencies. The scale of damage in emergencies is inversely proportional to the preventive measures taken to deal with them. It takes time to build, but seconds to destroy. It should therefore be our joint commitment to strengthen capacity at all levels to reduce the impact of disasters.

As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/323), the number and scale of natural disasters, particularly in the developing countries over the past decade, are on an alarming increase. While we cannot control the overpowering strength of natural disasters, we can reduce their impact and the devastation they cause. For that, we need to have in place an efficient emergency response system capable of handling large-scale disasters and mitigating their negative impact. I would also like to draw attention to humanitarian issues that used to be discussed during every General Assembly session.

Vulnerabilities are accentuated in most developing countries. The poverty-disaster interface has the potential for immense suffering and loss. In the long term, disasters have an adverse impact on the economic and social development of the vulnerable, especially the poor. Natural disasters severely impede progress towards development goals including the Millennium Development Goals. The 1994 Yokohama Strategy, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, provide frameworks for swift, systematic and well-coordinated responses to disasters by building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. If effectively implemented, those internationally agreed frameworks could substantially reduce loss of life and the impact on the social, economic and environmental assets of communities.

Pakistan welcomes the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). We remain committed to the work of the United Nations, and, accordingly, we will continue to contribute to the CERF.

I would also like to share our national experience in responding to a natural disaster of monumental proportion. The earthquake that struck Pakistan on 8 October 2005 wiped out in a matter of seconds what had taken many generations to build. That was a wake-up call for all of us. The world witnessed, minute by minute, the devastation caused by the earthquake. The loss of lives, bread-earners, livelihoods and infrastructure was unprecedented for us. The entire Pakistani nation came together to alleviate the suffering of the victims. The magnitude of the disaster was such that without international support we would have seen more pain and suffering. We acknowledge the outpouring of sympathy and assistance provided to the earthquake victims. The United Nations system played an important role in the coordination and mobilizing of resources.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Pakistan, I would like to thank each and every one who helped us in the aftermath of the earthquake.

I would now like to focus on some aspects that reinforced our belief in disaster preparedness. We were confronted with a situation where we had to go beyond the conventional disaster management model of response, relief and recovery to a more holistic model. That model included the processes of hazard identification and mitigation, community preparedness, integrated response efforts and recovery that had to be undertaken contiguously within a risk-management context to address issues of vulnerability.

First, we promulgated the National Disaster Management Ordinance in December 2006 and subsequently established the National Disaster Management Commission and Authority. The Prime Minister of Pakistan heads the National Disaster Management Commission, and its members include senior representatives from all provinces, leaders of the opposition in the upper and lower houses of the Parliament and representatives of the armed forces, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Secondly, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework was approved by our Disaster Management Commission in March this year. We are working towards the implementation of priorities identified in the National Disaster Risk Management Framework. That requires aligning federal and provincial coordination structures, capabilities and resources into a unified, all-discipline and all-hazards approach to domestic disaster management. For the first time, a complete spectrum of disaster risk management activities is brought together to include prevention of, preparedness for and response to disasters. The system will cover all sectors as well as all administrative levels of the Government.

From our experience in the post-earthquake phase, we have learned the following lessons.

First, the integration of disaster risk reduction into all sectoral and national development policies and practices is necessary for achieving sustainable social, economic and environmental development. Secondly, it is important to develop and strengthen institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at the community level, that can systematically contribute to building resilience against natural disasters. In most disasters, provincial, district and local resources normally provide the first line of emergency response and management support.

Thirdly, the communities play the role of first responders in any disaster management and disaster risk reduction. Community-based approaches offer viable solutions for managing and reducing risks and ensuring sustainable development. Fourthly, it is important to build on people's local knowledge, coping mechanisms and cultural practices. We are convinced that top-down disaster reduction interventions alone are not sufficient. Fifthly, there is a need for the systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes in the reconstruction of the affected areas.

Pakistan welcomes all efforts to strengthen the work of humanitarian agencies and the United Nations in meeting the challenges of natural disasters. In this regard, we consider that the draft "Declaration relating to basic tenets of humanitarian action in emergency situations", contained in document A/60/627 of 5 January 2006, is an important contribution to support progress in the world's preparedness to meet emergency situations.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Before I deliver my written statement, I just want to convey on behalf of the Palestinian people and our leadership our deepest condolences and to express solidarity with the people and Government of Bangladesh following the tragedy that has befallen them. We are sure that the Government and people of Bangladesh will be able to survive this tragedy and to move on with their own plans and agenda.

I stand before you today to address a most vital basis for continued Palestinian steadfastness towards their future independence and statehood: international assistance. For decades, international aid has helped ease the suffering and hardships endured by an entire people, more than half of whom have lived as refugees for nearly 60 years now and the remainder of whom have been living for more than 40 years under the subjugation of an oppressive foreign military occupation. The assistance that has been provided over the years in the various fields, both through the United Nations and as direct assistance to the Palestinian people, has helped to alleviate the hardship of scores of

Palestinians and Palestinian families. For countless others, it has been the only source of survival and sustenance throughout endless periods of instability, crisis and uncertainty.

While the Palestinian people and its leadership are deeply grateful for that invaluable assistance, we believe it is imperative to ask ourselves the following questions as we convene to discuss this issue today. How much have we helped that assistance to reach its full potential, and how much sabotage has the international community endured to its sustained assistance efforts? How many more internationally funded projects and efforts are we willing to allow the occupying Power to undermine and decimate as it continues pursuing its illegal policies and practices and continues deepening the humanitarian crisis, inevitably forcing that assistance to go off track, from development and State-building to relief and crisis management? How much longer is the international community willing to pay for the illegal acts of the occupying Power by relieving the consequences of those acts instead of bringing them to an end?

Numbers do not lie, and the latest figures regarding the humanitarian and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are astounding and tragic. In fact, all recent reports have documented the enormous burden international agencies are enduring in trying to address the continuously emerging needs of the Palestinian civilian population and to alleviate the crisis. At the same time, all infrastructure projects, industries and employment-generation projects have come to a grinding halt because of the repressive and unlawful measures imposed by the occupying Power, which have turned the Palestinian people from a people seeking development towards the birth of their future State to a population sinking into abject poverty and struggling to put food on the table and barely survive.

The latest report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, sums up the bleak situation as follows:

> "The Israeli closure system remains a primary cause of poverty and humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, and restricts Palestinian access to health and education services, employment, markets and social and religious networks." (*A/62/75, summary*)

The closures, movement restrictions and the wall, among other unlawful Israeli measures, have battered the economy, destroyed thousands of livelihoods and made thousands of families destitute. In that regard, according to the International Labour Organization, 7 out of 10 Palestinian households, comprising 2.4 million people, are living in poverty in the occupied Palestinian territory. A report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also addresses the extent of economic devastation caused by Israel's measures to the Palestinian economy, concluding that the Palestinian economy has been reduced to a size smaller than it was a decade ago due to Israeli restrictions on movement of Palestinian persons and goods. At the same time, the trade deficit has reached unprecedented proportions of 73 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), 30 per cent higher than its 30-year average. The World Bank monitoring report of September 2007 also noted that, in 2006 alone, Palestinian GDP contracted by nearly 8.8 per cent, and by a further 4.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2007.

The picture is of course most bleak in the Gaza Strip, where Israel's crippling siege has managed to bring the entire territory to the verge of collapse — socially, economically, medically and in all other aspects of life. This most brutal form of collective punishment by the occupying Power of the Palestinian civilian population, which undoubtedly amounts to a war crime, has thus far been unaffected and unshaken by international expressions of concern and calls for cessation. Instead, Israel continues to tighten the noose around Gaza and its population, choking life, hope and the prospects of a dignified future out of that part of the Palestinian territory, using illegal pretexts to cover up its abhorrent crimes. In reference to Israel's closures and siege of Gaza, Mr. John Dugard, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, has stated that "it is a controlled strangulation that seriously violates norms of human rights law and humanitarian law". Indeed, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as countless other relevant instruments and provisions of international law, are being gravely violated by the occupying Power.

For months now, Israel has closed down all six of Gaza's crossings, significantly restricting and reducing the amount and quality of goods allowed into Gaza and ending the prospect of export from Gaza at the same time. The effects have been devastating. Gaza's export agriculture sector is facing the most serious threat to its existence as we speak because of that policy. Additionally, tens of millions of dollars in internationally funded projects, including construction projects — such as projects worth $160 million in necessary construction funded by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNDP and other agencies — have been suspended. Additionally, a shocking 90 per cent of Gaza's industries have shut down their operations, adding tens of thousands more Palestinians to the list of unemployed and needy. The siege has raised prices, sent living standards plummeting and forced international aid organizations and donors to divert their attention to providing Palestinians in Gaza with their most basic needs, namely, food and medicine.

The World Bank has noted that the "pace of capital flight has reached an all-time high in the last two years, with almost no foreign direct investment" because of Israel's punishing policy of closure and siege on the occupied Palestinian territory.

UNCTAD also notes a downward economic spiral in the West Bank and Gaza, warning that this has reinforced the momentum of de-development. Meanwhile, the report of the Secretary-General on this matter, which is contained in document A/62/82, while seriously lacking in terms of political context, does not address this situation in the context of the occupation that exists. Nevertheless, the report states in paragraph 73 that

> "The effects of these closures could not be reversed with increased humanitarian assistance. Development initiatives to improve the Palestinian economy were expected to have limited impact in an environment where intense access restrictions prevailed."

Therefore, despite a marked increase in aid levels, socioeconomic indicators have continued to show significant decline. UNCTAD's report concludes that the Palestinian economy has lost $8.4 billion in potential income in five years, which is twice the size of the Palestinian economy today. That should alarm us all; for such potential income, combined with the losses incurred by destroyed or sabotaged internationally funded projects and efforts, shows the grave trap that Palestinian development efforts and international assistance have actually fallen into.

The alarming situation I have just described is not the whole picture. For over a year now, Israel, the occupying Power, has not only tightened its punishing siege but continues to illegally withhold hundreds of millions of dollars in Palestinian tax revenues, further curtailing the Palestinian Authority's ability to function normally and serve the Palestinian public. Despite the disbursement of some of the withheld Palestinian tax revenues, Israel continues to withhold a significant amount, cynically using it as a political bargaining chip.

Furthermore, the punishing sanctions imposed by the international community on the Palestinian Authority, combined with earlier disruptions in assistance, have made a bad economic situation almost catastrophic. The suspension of direct international aid to the Palestinian Authority in early 2006 — which resulted in limiting assistance to basically humanitarian needs — and the bypassing of the existing mechanisms for coordinating aid with the Palestinian Authority have had lasting negative consequences. As a result, although international aid through temporary mechanisms has increased, that cannot alleviate the long-term ramifications of Israel's siege and closure. Moreover, it is necessary to recall here the assessment by the World Bank that the Palestinian Authority achievements in transparency and accountability have been undermined by donor mechanisms to sidestep the Palestinian Authority.

Perhaps the devastating results and implications of these sanctions were most aptly described by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. John Dugard, who said in his report,

> "In effect, the Palestinian people have been subjected to economic sanctions — the first time an occupied people have been so treated. This is difficult to understand. Israel is in violation of major Security Council and General Assembly resolutions dealing with unlawful territorial change and the violation of human rights and has failed to implement the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, yet it escapes the imposition of sanctions. Instead, the Palestinian people, rather than the Palestinian Authority, have

> been subjected to possibly the most rigorous form of international sanctions imposed in modern times". (*A/HRC/4/17, para. 54*)

Moreover, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd, in a speech on 22 May 2007, also said that

> "There is a staggering irony in the contrast between the universal commitment to poverty eradication and the decision to impose on Palestinians one of the most severe sanctions regimes in recent history, thereby virtually guaranteeing the widespread incidence of extreme poverty".

The Secretary-General's report highlights that the rapid interventions by the United Nations system, temporary international mechanism and non-governmental organizations, which together disbursed upwards of $800 million in emergency food, cash and budget support, alleviated what could have been a much worse situation. However, recent reports by UNRWA, the World Food Programme (WFP) and other agencies also note that despite this increase, incomes have dropped while extreme poverty and food insecurity have substantially increased.

In fact, approximately two thirds of the children in Gaza now suffer from anaemia, that is, iron deficiency. Let me repeat that: approximately two thirds of children in Gaza today suffer from anaemia as a result of this situation, and, 51 per cent of the population in Gaza is food insecure. UNRWA and WFP are providing food assistance to 1.1 million people in Gaza, out of a population of 1.4 million. Mr. John Jing, UNRWA's Director of Operations in Gaza, has described one of the consequences of this bleak reality by saying that the 200,000 schoolchildren attending UNRWA-run schools come to school "hungry and unable to concentrate".

International sanctions may now have been partially lifted, but the long-term economic damage arising out of the situation I have just described remains. Hence, our responsibilities are tremendous and the challenges that lie ahead are almost overwhelming. But failure is not an option, and we continue to rely on international action to support us in addressing this critical issue, somehow reversing the downward economic trend and meeting the continuing needs of the Palestinian people in the meantime.

We wish to recall that in the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) held in London in 2005, donors established new aid coordination bodies. However, the effectiveness of those structures was undermined by the aid boycott. Going forward, those aid coordination bodies must be revitalized, especially with the presence of the new Quartet representative, Mr. Tony Blair, and his leveraging of those structures, which could strengthen them considerably. We welcome the results of the AHLC meeting held in New York on 24 September 2007 and chaired by Norway, which confirmed the commitment of the international community to support the Palestinian Authority in building strong and viable institutions. We look forward to the meeting to be held in this regard in December in Paris.

As the Palestinian Authority continues to find itself facing a large deficit, significant debt and failing revenues, which hinder its ability to plan for the fiscal year ahead or to take charge of its planned economic and other reform plans as a result of the situation I just described, we attach high hopes and expectations for the upcoming donor conference in Paris. In this regard, we look forward to seeing a tangible translation of the AHLC's confirmation of the Palestinian Authority's Reform and Development Plan 2008-2010, which must be regarded as a key test of true international support of and commitment to Palestinian-driven institution-building, recovery and growth. We hope that the December conference will change the fragmented nature of aid flowing into the West Bank and Gaza so far — aid which has largely remained based on short-term political positions rather than a collective, long-term view based on broader economic fundamentals, which is what the Palestinian economic recovery needs most.

The international community should not allow Israel to continue to defy its obligations as an occupying Power through the illegal policies and practices that have led to the state of economic regression Palestine now faces. It is incumbent upon the international community to ensure that the occupying Power does not continue attacking internationally funded projects and aid workers with impunity, as these repeated attacks have clearly derailed the development process and frustrated assistance efforts.

Indeed, the international community must exercise its moral and legal authority by compelling the occupying Power to cease its violations and end its choking siege of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which plunges Palestine into hopelessness and deprivation. The cause of the utter destitution Palestinians now suffer is known to all parties concerned — it is the continued Israeli military occupation. Thus, and as numerous international organizations agree, full economic recovery and rehabilitation in the occupied Palestinian territory, which are the goals driving international assistance, will only be possible when this occupation ends.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates and its Government, I would like to extend sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Bangladesh over the severe loss of life and property caused by the cyclone that struck that country recently. We hope that international assistance will be extended to Bangladesh to lessen the impact of this natural disaster and to help the affected people there as a matter of urgency. My country will assume its role in that effort.

The reports of the Secretary-General on the items before us forecast an increasing demand for humanitarian activities from the United Nations and its partners, the relevant non-governmental organizations in the humanitarian field, in coming years. This is due to the increase in the number and severity of natural disasters, especially in developing countries, as a result of climate change, population growth and environmental degradation. Their disastrous impact is compounded by poverty, armed conflict, the spread of serious diseases and the growing number of displaced persons in many parts of the world. The result will be additional assistance responsibilities for the United Nations and its relevant entities, and a need for more human and financial resources.

We commend the United Nations for its humanitarian activities and its essential role in mobilizing and coordinating international efforts to provide humanitarian and relief emergency assistance to millions in affected areas, and in easing the impact of disasters caused by natural phenomena, wars and armed conflicts, and we urge all Member States to strengthen their cooperation with the Organization, especially by fulfilling their financial commitments to the agencies and to other entities responsible for humanitarian assistance.

We also urge Member States to build partnerships with the United Nations to strengthen the necessary humanitarian arrangements at the national, regional and international levels. In this context, we reiterate the importance of implementing the recommendations of international conferences with respect to formulating national and international strategies to deal with disasters in all their stages, including early warning, relief assistance, reconstruction and development.

Developing countries should be responsible for the implementation of these strategies at the local level, and developed countries should meet their commitments by taking all necessary measures to assist developing countries in building national capacity to deal with natural disasters and the repercussions of war.

We further stress that, in time of war or natural disaster Governments and relevant authorities must provide United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners with access to those in need of assistance. Measures must also be taken to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers.

The United Arab Emirates believes in the importance of international solidarity in time of disaster and in the effectiveness of global partnerships in achieving the best results in emergencies assistance, and we attach great importance to fulfilling all our financial commitments to United Nations humanitarian assistance and development bodies. For next year, the Emirates has pledged to donate $1,538,000 to such bodies.

To participate effectively in the coordination of international relief assistance efforts, we established the Dubai International Humanitarian City, one of the largest international centres providing facilities and integrated logistical services to national, regional and international humanitarian organizations and agencies. In 2006, the United Arab Emirates joined the donor countries group, as well as the Donor Support Group, which comprises the world's most active humanitarian donor countries and which serves as an advisory body to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the major contributing countries in the field of humanitarian and emergency relief assistance as well as long-term assistance in many parts of the world. The Government and a group of charitable organizations in our country, such as the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Authority, the Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, the Mohammed bin Rashid Foundation for Charitable and Humanitarian Works, the Al-Maktoum Foundation and others, extend humanitarian assistance through financial and in kind donations to affected countries, both through cooperation with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and through direct bilateral arrangements with those countries.

At the same time, the United Arab Emirates works with such countries to build national capacity to deal with natural disasters through financing and otherwise supporting programmes, research and other efforts aimed at enhancing their capacity to predict disasters and mitigate their impact and to strengthen national infrastructure, in order to allow them to respond to future disasters.

During the last three years alone, the contribution of the Emirates amounted to $1 billion, allocated to supporting and enhancing the international efforts to assist victims of tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes in various parts of the world. Those efforts were in addition to generous donations to the reconstruction of countries and regions affected by armed conflict, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Darfur and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to support and assistance for the Palestinian people and their Government during the humanitarian crisis caused by the cruel, aggressive policies imposed on them by the Israeli occupying forces. Direct assistance by the United Arab Emirates to the Palestinians over the past five years has amounted to more than $1 billion, in addition to other humanitarian assistance extended through United Nations agencies, in order to meet immediate needs, and to rebuild towns destroyed by the continued Israeli assault.

In this regard, the Emirates has doubled its contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for 2008. Up to last August, it had also contributed $80 million to help support the budget of the Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, the value of relief and humanitarian projects carried out in Palestine by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Authority, has exceeded $122 million, in addition to other in-kind assistance.

The United Arab Emirates is deeply concerned at the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, which are deteriorating as a result of continuing Israeli attacks on people, property and infrastructure. We are also concerned at the policy of closures and blockades imposed on the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupying forces and at the denial of access to humanitarian assistance. This poses the threat of a serious humanitarian catastrophe.

We laud the role played by the United Nations and its relevant entities in assisting the Palestinian people, but at the same time we reaffirm the need to compel Israel, the occupying State, to end its attacks immediately, to lift its blockade of the Palestinians and to comply with legal international resolutions and the provisions of international humanitarian law, as well as to resume peace negotiations on the basis of relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We further urge donor countries to increase their assistance to the Palestinian people and Government so as to alleviate their suffering until the end of the Israeli occupation of their territory and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Until then, we continue to reaffirm our support for the ongoing mandate of UNRWA to provide services for refugees throughout its area of operation. In our view, it is necessary to continue financial support for the regular and emergency activities of the Agency so that it can fulfil its commitments to Palestinian refugees.

Mr. McNee (Canada): At the outset, the Canadian Government and the Canadian people wish to extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the recent cyclone in Bangladesh.

Beyond simple goodwill, humanitarian action responds to the acute needs of crisis-affected populations and can restore dignity and hope to people's lives. This is not without challenge or risk. Canada attaches great importance to the efforts of the United Nations to provide leadership and coordination within the humanitarian system. To that end, Canada

welcomes the progress achieved over the past year to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency and coordination of humanitarian action.

However, the international community can ill afford complacency. We need to look no further than the Darfur region of the Sudan, Chad, Sri Lanka or Afghanistan to measure the toll that conflicts, old and new, continue to take on civilian populations. In Afghanistan, to take but one example, we are reminded that, without security, there can be no reconstruction or democratic development, and that the provision of humanitarian assistance can be challenging.

Achieving real results in the face of conflict is not easy. Moreover, humanitarian action cannot be considered a substitute for political solutions. In addition, the hundreds of thousands of people affected by natural disasters over the past year remind the international community of the importance of making strategic investments in disaster risk reduction in order to minimize vulnerability to natural disasters.

Canada supports the ongoing efforts of Sir John Holmes, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to strengthen international humanitarian response. The Canadian Government also agrees with him that these efforts should no longer be termed "reform" of humanitarian response. Better coordination, more flexible financing mechanisms and strong humanitarian coordinators in the field should simply be viewed as the best way to conduct international humanitarian action.

The rollout of the cluster coordination system, for example, has proven the system to be an innovative approach to promoting stronger inter-agency cooperation, including cooperation with other humanitarian organizations. Canada welcomes the findings of the recently released cluster evaluation. Where it has been implemented, the cluster approach has helped to improve the identification of gaps in response capacity, contributed to better information-sharing, defined centres of accountability and enabled more effective advocacy.

These are important successes, but challenges remain. We now need to buttress the capacity of cluster leads to ensure they can effectively and consistently play a guidance role. We must address constructively those clusters where performance has lagged behind. Accountability on the part of cluster leads is important to ensure that enhanced coordination efforts bring results to those requiring assistance. In this context, the cluster approach rollout should continue.

Effective coordination relies on having the right people with the right mix of skills and experience available to provide clear leadership. Here, the role of humanitarian coordinators remains vital. Their professional experience, training and skill sets should enable them to provide invaluable leadership for the overall humanitarian presence. Canada urges the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to continue to focus on strengthening the role and capacity of humanitarian coordinators. This will require greater attention in order to ensure real and lasting progress, but it remains central to ensuring effective international humanitarian action.

Canada also supports ongoing efforts to enhance the flexibility of humanitarian funding mechanisms. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is an important example of this commitment. We are very pleased that CERF continues to demonstrate its value as a bridge for providing timely financing for rapid-onset and under-funded emergencies. Over one-third of Member States — developing and developed countries alike — have already contributed to CERF. Canada urges Member States that have not yet done so to consider contributing to this important Fund, while maintaining the level of their commitments to other humanitarian financing tools.

Humanitarian funding mechanisms such as CERF must be guided by coherent and reliable evidence-based needs assessments and analysis. This is at the heart of good humanitarian donorship. Here, OCHA has a critical role to play in order to ensure that the quality of needs assessments is consistent, while timely, since donors rely on them to respond appropriately. United Nations humanitarian actors must work closely together to ensure that efforts are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

(*spoke in French*)

There are some cases, however, where troops possess a unique capacity for action that can be put to use in responding to serious natural disasters. In this regard, OCHA has a key role to play in ensuring that assets are deployed based on assessed needs, rather than being supply-driven, and that such assets are utilized in a manner that respects the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Our goal must be to provide the right assets at the right time, in order to

address genuine needs and gaps in humanitarian response.

More than ever, the commitment of Member States to strengthening humanitarian responses in crisis contexts must include a renewed commitment to ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian workers. Attacks against United Nations and other humanitarian workers increased dramatically during the past 10 years, and they often occur with complete impunity. Once again, Canada urges all Member States which have not done so to sign or ratify the 1994 Convention on Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Finally, I would like to express our gratitude to Sir John Holmes for the diligence with which he is discharging his responsibilities as Emergency Relief Coordinator.

In conclusion, we as Member States must together continue to elaborate and improve on the tools and strategies needed to help guide international humanitarian action. We must also be in a position to monitor and evaluate humanitarian access and request that States report on their actions when such access has been hindered or denied. To this end, we must all continue to be vigilant. The success of our efforts will ultimately be judged on our ability to protect and help the most vulnerable populations.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): Let me first of all express my Government's deep sympathy for and solidarity with the Government and people of Bangladesh at this very difficult hour.

Norway is a strong supporter of the humanitarian work of the United Nations. We support the Organization's reform agenda and the efforts made to strengthen the humanitarian support system. A lot has been done but, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. I intend to highlight some important issues in this regard.

Norway is deeply concerned about the sexual and gender based violence that each year destroys the lives of thousands of women and girls, as well as men and boys. The continued use of sexual violence as a method of warfare is appalling. Few perpetrators of these abhorrent acts are brought to justice. There must be an end to the impunity for these severe crimes. As guardians of international humanitarian and human rights law it is our collective responsibility to ensure that such acts do not go unpunished.

The response from the international community must be intensified, including by the United Nations, which should take the lead in establishing more effective preventive and protective measures to address sexual and gender-based violence.

The Secretary-General's recommendations for action against sexual violence, contained in his report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2007/643) are important steps in this regard and in the formation of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. The international community has shown its revulsion of sexual violence, including by the adoption of various United Nations resolutions. There is an urgent need for the full implementation of these resolutions.

Access is another major challenge. Access for humanitarian actors to populations in need and the related ability of such populations to receive humanitarian assistance is the prerequisite for all humanitarian operations, as set forth under international humanitarian law. The host Government has the responsibility to ensure rapid, safe and unhindered access and to fully cooperate with the United Nations and other humanitarian actors. The arbitrary denial of such access is an unacceptable practice that places the lives of millions in danger and unnecessarily prolongs their suffering.

Protection is key in this regard. Norway supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and we are looking forward to the debate in the Council tomorrow.

We need to be better prepared to respond to humanitarian emergencies than we currently are. Prevention needs to be placed higher on the agenda of the United Nations. It is widely acknowledged that climate change causes environmental degradation, floods, droughts, hurricanes, involuntary migration, increased urbanization and an explosion in slum-dwelling. We are also faced with prolonged armed conflicts that increasingly affect already vulnerable States and populations.

Prevention efforts will save more lives and cost less, but, the world community seems more willing to pay for the damages than to invest in the cost for

preventive measures. What should be done to mitigate the effects of humanitarian disasters in this changing world?

First, there is a need for a global spokesperson. In this regard Norway welcomes the commitment demonstrated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in increasing awareness of the importance of better preventive measures. These efforts should be intensified.

Secondly, we need to strengthen our resolve in reforming the international humanitarian response system, including more responsive and appropriate funding mechanism, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund, and the establishment of humanitarian response funds in disaster-prone countries. Adequately funding is key, however, and we urge more Member States and other donors to contribute to these funds. There is furthermore a need for better coordination both among the various United Nations agencies and between the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors. There is a need to strengthen the functions of the resident and humanitarian coordinators. To this end, Norway is a strong supporter of the cluster approach, which increasingly will contribute to better coordination and prioritization in relation to existing humanitarian needs, and furthermore will serve as an early-warning system for emerging disasters.

Finally, there is still a need for enhanced efforts in capacity development for humanitarian personnel, as well as a need to establish better roster systems with pools of experts from all humanitarian fields that are immediately operational and ready for deployment. Only in this way will we be ready and prepared to deal with the humanitarian consequences when disaster strikes.

Mr. Hussein (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports. They help facilitate our discussion on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, a subject to which Egypt attaches great importance and attention. The reality reflected in these reports raises the concern of the international community about present and future challenges, meaning that it should work effectively to tackle those concerns, as last year witnessed continued increases in the number of disasters and their victims.

We are concerned about the statistics which indicate that the number of climate-related or hydro-meteorological hazard events, such as floods, hurricanes and droughts, had increased dramatically, particularly in Africa, over the last 20 years. That prevailing pattern of increase in frequency and intensity of disasters and in their strength, destructive impact and consequences is a major source of concern. The economic impact of disasters associated with natural hazards has been recognized as a key factor challenging the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite the progress made in some long-standing emergencies, according to the improvement of political circumstances in these conflicts and the reduction of violence, the same period continues to witness an increased degeneration of those conflicts, the use of many forms of violence and the steady rate of increase of natural hazards such as earthquakes, hurricanes, cyclones, storms and floods. Such hazards affirm the need to focus on strengthening the capacity of the relevant United Nations entities to provide humanitarian assistance to confront the results of emergency cases on the lives and livelihood of millions of people.

Other conflicts continue to rage throughout the world, contributing to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation caused when approximately 4 million people were forced to flee their homes in 2006. This requires the provision of additional humanitarian assistance to meet their needs. I should like to emphasis the situation in sisterly Iraq, where, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the civilian death toll now averages more than 100 per day. An estimated 8 million civilians, including internally displaced persons and refugees to neighbouring countries, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the deteriorating situation in Somalia requires greater efforts by the international community to provide necessary humanitarian assistance, given the difficult conditions in the country and the international disregard of its need for peace and stability.

Therefore, Egypt emphasizes the urgent need for institutional capacity-building in developing countries so they can effectively and successfully manage natural disasters. That means first strengthening the capacities of countries in the areas of predictability, preparedness and early warning and helping them to eliminate the

effects of the disaster, to rebuild and to return effectively to the path of sustainable development.

Despite the many international documents emphasizing the importance of building disaster response capacities, these remain limited because of a lack of resources and funding, due mainly to the increasing number of natural disasters and their strong effects as a result of climate change and our feeble capacity to deal with it. Greater United Nations efforts are required to coordinate the efforts of international bodies and to promote international multilateral cooperation to respond to these changes.

Therefore, we affirm the importance of the role of donors and the relevant humanitarian organizations, working together with Member States, in investing in strategies aimed at preparedness and swift recovery and in reducing the dangers posed by emergency humanitarian situations. We also agree that the regional dimension is important in responding to crises that require cross-border responses.

In that regard, humanitarian actors must fulfil their specific obligations under national and international humanitarian law when they interact with the citizens — particularly women and children — of the affected countries in which they operate. In addition, they must not become involved in activities such as sexual exploitation and child trafficking, which violate the principles of the United Nations Charter, national laws and international humanitarian law. They must be committed to the rules set out in resolution 46/182, which provides for the role of relevant non-governmental organizations and civil society in activities carried out in countries affected by humanitarian disasters.

Eager to participate in international efforts to cope with the effects of humanitarian disasters and to deliver emergency humanitarian relief, Egypt was among the founders of the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), providing it with financial and technical support through an Egyptian expert's participation in the Fund's Advisory Group. In that regard, we support efforts to maximize the Fund's effectiveness and help it achieve the goals set out by the General Assembly, in areas where insufficient funding has been made available. We also welcome the role of the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, which was launched in September 2006 to enhance the disaster-preparedness of States that are most vulnerable to disasters. To date, $30 million has been contributed to the Facility.

I should like to express our condolences to the people and the Government of Bangladesh on the losses resulting from the most recent cyclone to strike their country, which caused loss of life and damage to property. In that connection, we call on the United Nations to urgently provide, through CERF or any other relevant initiative, all the assistance necessary to help that sisterly country recover from the effects of this painful disaster.

Recent events highlight the importance of according particular attention to the Secretary-General's report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/62/82). The tragic realities faced by the Palestinian people — including the destruction of infrastructure, the cutting off of electricity and water, the chopping down and uprooting of trees and the destruction of farmland — have worsened their humanitarian situation and caused a human tragedy. That requires greater efforts by the international community, particularly the United Nations, to intervene to stop those policies and practices and to provide the assistance necessary to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The continued closure operations, the financial crisis and the withholding of Palestinian tax revenues by Israel have had an immediate impact in terms of declining income, increasing poverty, lack of food security and reduced capacity to respond to natural disasters in the occupied Palestinian territories. Therefore, we call on the international community to provide greater financial support in order to prevent further deterioration of the quality of life within the occupied Palestine territories and a further decline of the Palestinian economy, and to meet the increasing economic, social, and humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. Continued international efforts to that end should be accompanied by efforts to establish a viable independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

The role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East must also be supported so it can play its role in the Palestinian territories. Israel must respect the Agreement on Movement and Access, enabling the Palestinian people to interact freely with the outside world, to gain access to humanitarian assistance and to lift restrictions on delivery of such assistance.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under these agenda items. I should like to make a few comments on the theme.

Over the past year, frequent natural disasters have caused enormous human and economic losses to the Governments and peoples of the countries affected. In 2006, the world endured 427 such disasters, which caused the loss of 23,000 lives, disrupted the daily lives of 143 million people and resulted in economic damage amounting to nearly $20 billion. Since the beginning of this year, the United Nations system has launched as many as 15 humanitarian flash appeals, breaking the record for the same period in previous years. United Nations humanitarian relief work now faces increasingly daunting challenges.

Since emergency disaster relief efforts began in 2004 in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, the leading and coordinating role of the United Nations in international humanitarian assistance activities has gained increasing attention. With broad and in-depth participation in international humanitarian assistance efforts by more and more countries, international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, finding ways to further enhance coordination and make full and effective use of resources to maximize the benefits has become a new and arduous task confronting the United Nations.

The Chinese delegation believes that there are two main aspects to enhancing coordination. The first is coordination within the United Nations system. Many United Nations departments and agencies involved in humanitarian assistance activities have different competences, spheres of operation, areas of focus and comparative advantages. They complement one another, but they also have a certain degree of overlap. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen inter-agency coordination, to improve the overall planning of humanitarian activities, to clarify the division of labour and to enhance the efficiency of operations and the cost-effectiveness of the use of resources.

The second aspect is the coordination of relief activities provided by the entire international community. The United Nations plays an irreplaceable role in that respect. We welcome the building of partnerships between the United Nations and relevant countries, international institutions and non-governmental organizations, with a view to achieving better information-sharing and broadening areas of cooperation.

In relief activities, the Government of the affected country bears primary responsibility for organizing, initiating, coordinating and implementing external relief assistance. It should also play a leading role as emergency humanitarian assistance is received, as well as during the transition from relief to development.

When providing humanitarian assistance to affected countries, the United Nations should always adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. It should respect the sovereignty of those countries, enhance communication and collaboration with their Governments, fully utilize their existing relief mechanisms and be guided by the needs of the affected Governments and peoples in organizing and coordinating international humanitarian assistance.

In recent years, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has worked tirelessly to assess disaster situations, appeal for donations and organize and coordinate emergency humanitarian assistance worldwide. The Chinese delegation expresses its appreciation to the Office and supports the further strengthening of its leading role in coordinating international humanitarian assistance activities. It is our hope that OCHA will continue to cooperate actively with the Governments of affected countries and provide the necessary guidance and assistance to humanitarian actors at all levels.

Since its launch in March 2006, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has provided timely and effective relief assistance in a number of major natural disasters and emergencies, thus playing a positive role in improving resource allocation and utilization and in helping some previously neglected countries and regions hit by disasters to gain access to humanitarian assistance. The Chinese delegation calls upon all Governments, those of developed countries in particular, to contribute generously to the Fund in order to reach the target of mobilizing $500 million for 2008.

Greater international and regional cooperation is one of the effective means to help disaster-prone countries to upgrade their capacity for disaster preparedness, reduction and response. The United Nations should attach importance to facilitating such cooperation; it should offer technical and financial

assistance to highly disaster-prone countries to help them gradually to establish early warning systems and to enhance their capacity to prepare for, mitigate and respond to emergencies, so as to ensure that humanitarian relief helps to address both the symptoms and the root causes of natural disasters.

China, a developing country, is no stranger to natural disasters. We know first-hand what suffering and economic losses natural disasters bring to the affected peoples and countries. My country is hit by various kinds of natural disasters every year, so it is the perennial task of government at all levels to prepare for and mitigate disasters and to provide emergency disaster relief, which has entailed huge economic burdens for the Government.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to international cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance. It has actively participated in international humanitarian relief activities in response to requests by affected countries and to appeals by the international community. This year, the Chinese Government has provided timely bilateral humanitarian assistance, within its capacity, both in cash and in kind, to many affected countries, among them Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Madagascar, the Sudan and Greece, to name just a few.

Those examples fully demonstrate the sympathy, support and concern of the Government and the people of China for affected Governments and peoples. My Government will continue, as always, to support the efforts of the United Nations and the international community in disaster prevention, mitigation and relief and stands ready to help affected countries to overcome disasters and rebuild their homes.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.